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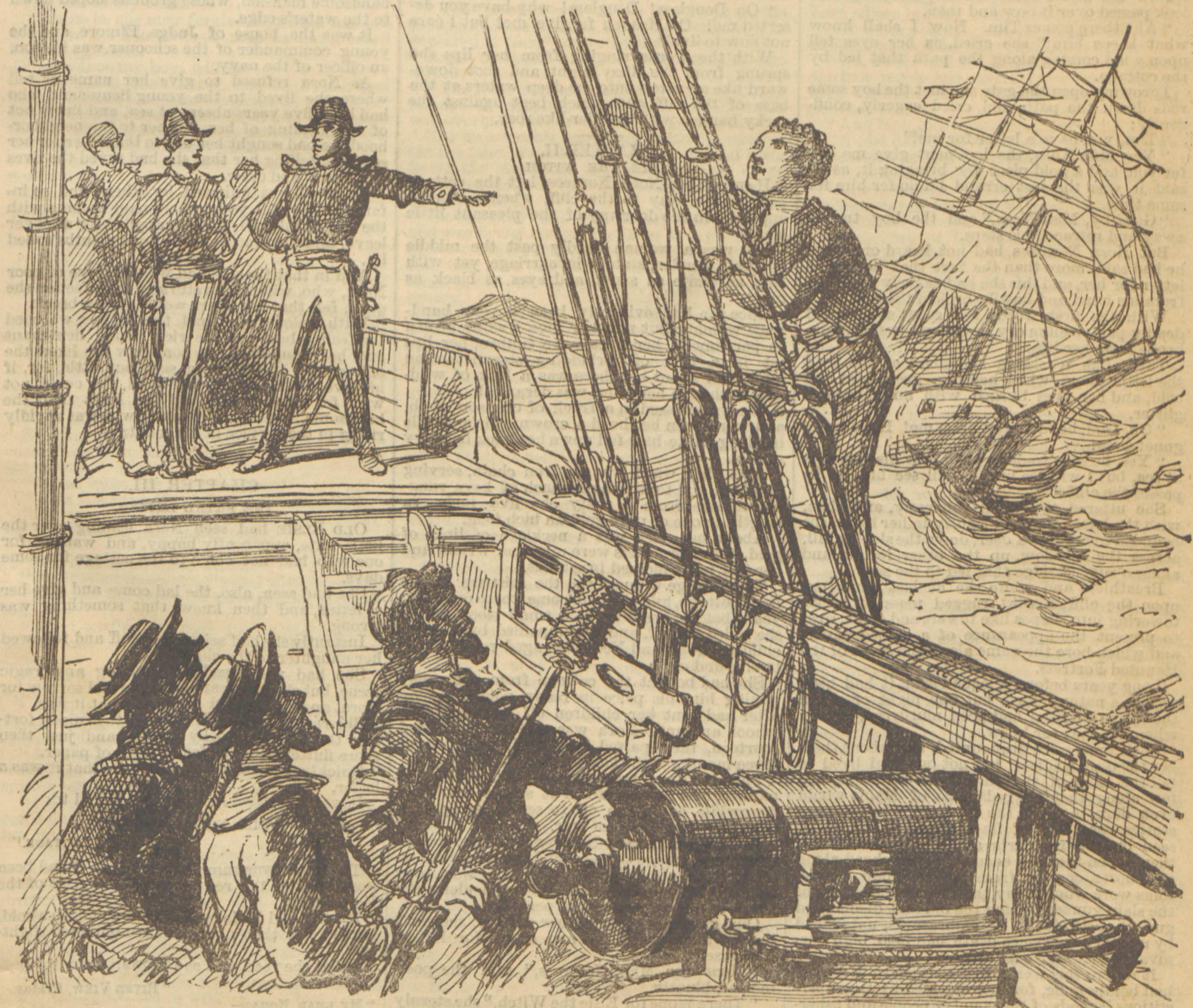
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NED, THE CABIN BOY; or, THE WITCH OF THE HAUNTED FORT.

BY JACK FARRAGUT.



"WHO IS THAT DARING BOY?" SHOUTED THE LIEUTENANT. "NED, THE CABIN BOY, SIR," ANSWERED A MIDDY.

Ned, the Cabin Boy.

Ned, the Cabin Boy;

OR,

The Witch of the Haunted Fort.

A SALT-WATER ROMANCE.

BY JACK FARRAGUT.

CHAPTER I.

DESERTED.

A LITTLE white cottage just peeped out of a pine forest, that sheltered it from the rude northern blast.

A tiny yard, with shell-bordered walks and flower-beds, a rustic arbor, and a maiden leaning over the little gate made up the rustic picture.

To her ears came the deep roar of the surf breaking upon the rocky coast, which proved that the sea was not far away, and before her the hill sloped gently down to a meadow, in which was a cow feeding, the tinkling of the bell about her neck mingling musically with the waters dashing upon the beach, the sighing of the pines, and the notes of a bird trilling its sweet song to its mate in the forest.

A calm, a pretty, home-like scene, and the one enjoying it a maiden of rare loveliness of face and form.

She was dressed neatly, yet plainly, but her air was that of one who had been reared in retirement, though her lot then was an humble one.

Now her sweet face was sad, and a wearied look passed over it now and then.

"Ah! there comes Tim. Now I shall know what keeps him!" she cried, as her eyes fell upon a lad coming along the path that led by the cottage.

Throwing open the gate she met the boy some rods down the path, and cried eagerly, confidently:

"Tim, you have a letter for me?"

"Yes, Miss Nora, the loon'nt give me one fer you, and a gold-piece fer bringing it, as he said it was the last errand I'd do fer him fer some time."

"Good-by, Miss Nora," and the boy turned away and retraced his steps.

But Nora Norcross had not heard one word he had said, more than the fact that he had a letter for her, and this she had eagerly snatched from his hand and hastily broken the seal.

With the first words she read she turned deadly pale, while a cry, as of some sudden pain, broke from her lips.

Then like a statue she stood as she read the letter aloud, while her face grew hard and cold, and her eyes burned with an unnatural glitter.

"Oh, God, have mercy upon me! He is gone! gone! gone!"

"Yes, he sails to-day; even now his vessel is at sea, but I will see him, I will see him as he passes the cliff."

She uttered the words hoarsely, and then, with the letter clutched tightly in her hand, she bounded away like a deer, down the sloping hill, across the meadow, up the other incline and along a rugged ridge that led to the sea.

Breathless and white she at last came out upon the cliff, a wild, rugged mass of rocks, towering into shapes like towers and roofs, so as to present the appearance of a ruined castle, and which bore the name along the coast of the Haunted Fortress.

Long years before, a legend said, it had been used as a natural fort: but one night of storm the entire garrison had been murdered, but by whom no one ever knew.

Their guns were dismounted, and about them lay the dead soldiers; but not one had lived to tell the story of that midnight massacre, and few along that rugged coast of Maine would even dare to go to the old ruin, while strange stories were told of its sentinel ghosts being seen on the ramparts at night, and now and then, when the deep boom of a gun echoed along the shores, coming from no one knew where, folks were wont to say that it was the spirits of the slain gunners, firing the old and dismantled guns that still lay in the embrasures, untouched by mortal hands since death had held high carnival there long years before.

It was to this weird spot that Nora Norcross had boldly gone, for, not alarmed by the superstitious legends of the country people and fishermen, she had before invaded its hallowed retreat.

Now, with the letter still grasped in her hand, she bounded through the natural fortification, until she came to a shelf of rock that overhung the sea more than a hundred feet below.

Here she halted, and her blazing eyes swept the waters up the coast.

"Ah, there comes the ship around Pine Island that bears him from me! Oh! cruel ship! oh cruel man to desert me! Oh, God! what can I, what shall I do?"

She uttered the words in agony of spirit, and dropping upon her knees, clasped her hands as though in supplication.

Out from the mainland, and from behind a pine-covered island, sailed a stately vessel, one of the packet ships of that day, plying between ports on the coast of Maine and New York, for railroads and steamers were unheard of then.

The vessel had a good breeze, and with all sail set, came flying down the coast, the channel bringing her within less than a mile of the cliff upon which stood the ruined fortress.

Eagerly the eyes of the young girl were bent upon the coming craft, yet more than a league distant, and with beating heart and face full of anguish, she watched it as it came nearer and nearer.

At last the vessel was abreast of the cliff, and the channel here turned abruptly seaward, so that the stern of the packet swung around, and those tanding upon it were in plain view of the eyes of the maiden.

Then from her lips broke a shriek that went far across the waters, and the wind being off-shore, reached the ears of those upon the vessel, for their eyes turned quickly upon the slender form, now standing upon the very edge of the cliff, and with her arms outstretched toward the sea.

"Oh Douglass! Douglass! why have you deserted me? Oh Heaven forgive me! but I care not now to live!"

With the words ringing from her lips she sprung from the dizzy height, and shot downward like an arrow into the deep waters at the base of the cliff, and which beat against the rocky barrier with thunder-like roar.

CHAPTER II.

ELsie, THE WITCH.

HARDLY had Nora Norcross left the cottage gate, on her way to the cliff, when a woman appeared in the doorway of the pleasant little house.

She was a woman hardly past the middle age, tall, slender, stately in carriage, yet with hair as white as snow, and eyes as black as night.

Once she had evidently been a very handsome woman; but now her face was as brown as parchment, her eyes were sunken, her lips set in a look of forbidding sternness, and altogether about her there was a look of wildness as though her mind was deranged.

She was dressed in a frock of crimson cloth, and wore upon her head a crown of iron, while her long white hair fell down her back in heavy masses.

About her waist was an iron chain, serving as a belt, and to it hung a bunch of keys, ranging in size from a rusty one five inches in length, to one of pure gold an inch long.

About her neck was a necklace of links of gold, heavy bracelets were upon her wrists, and her feet were incased in sandals.

This strange woman was the mistress of the little cottage, and she had come there one day, years before, arriving in a small sloop, which she sailed herself, and accompanied by her two children, Nora and Ned, then aged respectively twelve and eight.

She had bought the cottage from a farmer, paying him his price in ready gold, and soon after had sent her children off to Portland to school, and until Nora was eighteen, and Ned fourteen, they passed only their vacation of three months with their mother.

Then the daughter returned to live with her mother, and Ned remained at school; but only for awhile, as he ran off to sea, shipping as a cabin-boy in a vessel-of-war.

From the first, Mrs. Norcross had been looked upon as a strange woman, and she had held so aloof from all neighbors, that she was soon shunned by the dwellers inland and along the coast, as a most mysterious person.

One day, a year after her arrival, she went to the village post-office and asked for letters for herself.

"None for Mrs. Norcross," said the postmaster, bluntly.

"There is one for Elsie the Witch," she sternly said.

The man started, and replied:

"Yes, there is a letter here for one of that name."

"Hand it to me, for it is mine."

The postman gladly handed out the letter, which was addressed in a bold hand, and in red ink.

Seizing it, she walked away, and from that day became known as Elsie the Witch.

As time went on, her dress became more and more peculiar, until at last she dressed as she has been described to the reader, while in her hand, when she went out, was a long staff, one end having an iron spike upon it, and the top being surmounted by an infant's skull, beneath which were a pair of tiny bones crossed.

As the fishermen of the coast often beheld her standing upon the cliff, or seated upon the natural fortifications that surmounted it, they added to her name that of the Witch of the Haunted Fort, and she was certainly shunned by every one, though her children had been liked by those who had ever met them.

Some months before the opening of this story a small vessel-of-war had appeared off the coast just as a heavy storm was brewing, and had fired a gun for a pilot.

Not a fisherman would stir to run her in, fearing to take the risk, and seeing this, Nora Norcross, who, like her mother, seemed a born sailor, had gone from her place on the cliff to the cove below, sprung into her little skiff and boldly rowed out to the vessel, boarding it just before the storm struck it.

Though amazed that a girl had come to act as the pilot, the young commander of the vessel promptly accepted her services, and in fact could do nothing else; and through the tempest and danger she ran the vessel into the river harbor up the coast, dropping anchor in front of a handsome mansion, whose grounds sloped down to the water's edge.

It was the house of Judge Elmore, and the young commander of the schooner was his son, an officer of the navy.

As Nora refused to give her name or tell where she lived to the young lieutenant, who had been five years absent at sea, and knew not of the coming of her mother to the neighborhood, he had sought her out to thank her for her services, telling her that she had saved the lives of himself and crew.

This visit was followed by others, and so infatuated had the young lieutenant become with the beautiful girl, that he applied for a longer leave, and lingered at home until months rolled by.

And in that time he had won the love of poor Nora, who, without a return of the affection she gave, felt that her heart would surely break.

With jealous eyes had the mother watched the feeling between the rich young lieutenant and her daughter; but somehow she liked the officer, and trusting him, said but little, for, if his love was honest for her child, she could not wish for a better husband for Nora than the handsome, wealthy lieutenant, who was rapidly rising in the service of his country.

CHAPTER III.

THE FATAL LETTER.

OLD ELSIE had seen Nora leaning over the little gate, apparently happy, and waiting for one who had not come to the cottage for some days.

She had seen, also, the lad come and give her a letter, and then knew that something was wrong.

Instantly she had seized her staff and followed her daughter to the cliff.

She had not dreaded beholding any tragic scene, but she had feared trouble and sorrow for Nora, and she wished to know what it was.

She reached the cliff, entered the ruined fortress through the rocky barrier, and just then there fluttered to her feet a piece of paper.

Quickly she seized it, and saw that it was a letter.

It was addressed in a fine, bold hand to:

"MISS NORA NORCROSS,
PINE GROVE COTTAGE."

The paper was rumpled as though it had been crushed, and the red seal was the crest of the Elmores.

Hastily Old Elsie read it, and aloud, in a cold, harsh voice that now and then quivered slightly.

What she read was as follows:

"RIVER VIEW, Friday.

"MY DEAR NORA:

"I know when you receive this letter you will cast me utterly out of your heart; but it is my duty to

let you know that I have not acted right toward you.

"The truth is, Nora—and it must be told now—I left home five years ago when I was a middy of seventeen, and, though that young, I had a little girl sweetheart in Boston.

"Upon my return home some months since, I dared not attempt to pilot my vessel in, especially in the face of a storm, and you dared come out and do so, and your act saved the life of my crew and myself, for, as you know, my mainmast had been weakened by a shot, and would not stand the strain to work off the coast in a blow.

"I met you, and you fascinated me.

"They told me that your mother was a witch, but it mattered not, I could not get you out of my thoughts by day or by night.

"I cannot say that I loved you, and yet I could not give you up.

"My father threatened me with disinheritance, if I did not give up the daughter of a witch, and at last sent for the father of the young girl to whom I was engaged, asking him to bring her down to visit us, and hoping that she would be willing to marry me, as I was again to be ordered off for a long cruise.

"They came five days ago, and seeing Eola Curtis, my heart was rescued from the toils which you had wound about it.

"She was beautiful, rich, refined, accomplished, and willing to marry me, so this morning she became my wife, and we board the Packet when it comes down the river, to sail for Boston, so that I will not see you again.

"If I cause you pain, Nora, forgive me and forget me.

"You have told me that your brother Ned was in the service, and I will look him up and try to advance him all in my power for your sake.

"Now farewell, Nora, and may your life be a long and happy one is the prayer of

"DOUGLASS ELMORE."

"Heartless hound that he is, he has dared to write this to my child.

"So be it, she may forgive, but I am not one to do so, for I know well that he has crushed her young heart.

"Advance my boy, will he?

"Well, Ned shall know who he is, and that he has broken his sister's heart, and he will not be my son, if he does not hold him to account for his crime, for crime it is, one of these days.

"But where is my poor sorrowing child?

"Nora! Nora!" and she made the old ruin ring with her loud cries.

But only the echoes answered her, and she searched here and there for the missing one.

"Ha! there sails the ship that bears the accursed villain and his accomplished bride.

"Oh! that I had him now where I could touch him with my death-wand," and she shook her weird staff after the flying vessel.

"You sail on Friday, fine craft, and my curses go with you and those who tread your decks."

She now stood upon the very edge of the cliff, at the spot from where Nora had sprung into the sea.

Then, from below came a call:

"Ho, Mother Norcross!"

She turned her eyes downward and beheld a coast fisherman in his little skiff, tacking upon the waves.

"What want you with me, man?

"I am Elsie the Witch," she answered back.

"Do you seek your daughter, good Elsie?" his face turning pale at her reply.

"I do."

"She is beneath these waters."

"Fool! what mean you?" cried Elsie savagely.

"She lies far down in these depths, good Elsie."

"Liar! would you hurl your stories into my teeth?" and she shook her wand viciously at him.

In alarm, for he feared her power, the fisherman called out loudly:

"Good mother, I tell you only the truth, for I was fishing under the lee of yonder island, and saw Nora appear upon the cliff.

"First she dropped upon her knees, then she waved her hands toward yonder cliff, next she sprung off and went down into the sea.

"I rowed quickly here, but not a sign of her can I find, and I know that the sea will not give her up."

Without one word in response Elsie had heard the man's story, but he could not see the livid look that came over her face, hear her hard-drawn breath, or see the wild glare in her black eyes.

"Yes, he tells the truth—the girl was love-mad, and has taken her own life," she said in a low, quivering voice.

"Ho, man! did you say she sprung from this cliff?" she called out in wild tones.

"Yes, from the very spot on which you stand, good mother," was the answer shouted back above the roar of the surf.

"Go! and the blessing, not the curse, of Elsie the Witch attend you for trying to save my child," cried the woman, and the fisherman rowed rapidly away.

Then, down upon her knees upon the very edge of the precipice, with her hands grasping her wand, which she held above her head, she cried in thrilling tones:

"Douglass Elmore, I, Elsie, the Witch of the Haunted Fort, swear that you shall curse the day that gave you birth, and that my bitterest hatred shall fall upon you and those you love, to avenge the one your cruelty has slain."

CHAPTER IV.

NED, THE CABIN BOY.

SEVERAL months after the suicide of Nora, and the oath of revenge made upon the fatal spot by Elsie the Witch, a storm was sweeping over the broad Atlantic.

The waves were running savagely landward, the surf beat against the foundations of the cliff until it trembled beneath the rude shocks, and the wind howled through the rocks and pines with a fury that drove the sea-birds for shelter far inland.

Facing the storm as she stood upon the cliff, was Elsie the Witch, her long white hair blowing far out behind her, and her eyes fastened upon two vessels far out at sea.

As she looked, ever and anon there mingled with the deep mutterings of the thunder the roar of a heavy gun, and even an unpracticed eye could have told that the two vessels visible far off-shore were pursuer and pursued.

"The sloop-of-war is an Englishman, the schooner an American, and the latter will be captured, I fear," muttered Elsie.

After a silence of some moments, she continued:

"The little schooner is running for the land, in hope of escaping, but I think the Britisher will overhaul her, or cripple her by her fire."

The two vessels were now heading straight for the land, a schooner of some hundred tons, flying the American flag, being a mile ahead of a large sloop-of-war at whose peak was the British ensign.

The schooner was well armed and manned, and was firing constantly from her stern guns at her pursuer; but she was no match for her foe, who now and then sent a shot from a large pivot gun flying after the plucky little cruiser.

The storm seemed increasing, rather than abating in fury, and the sea seemed terrible enough in its anger, without the rage of man adding to the danger of his fellow-man.

Presently a shot from the Englishman cut away the main-topmast of the schooner, and the handsome young commander who stood on the deck, called out for a man to go into the rigging and fish in the swinging stick, ere it broke from its hold and came down upon the heads of those upon deck.

But not a man moved, for all seemed to realize that they had to face the danger of the storm, the fire of the English vessel, and being hurled from the lofty height by the swinging spar.

"What! does no man obey?" called out the officer in trumpet tones.

Hardly had the words left his lips when there sprung into the shrouds a slender form, and, although the wind threatened to tear him from his hold, began the dangerous ascent.

"Who is that daring boy?" shouted the lieutenant, for such was the rank of the officer in command.

"Ned, the Cabin Boy, sir," answered a middy.

"Well, Ned, the Cabin Boy wins a middy's berth in the navy for his plucky work this day," and raising his voice the lieutenant cried:

"Bravo, my boy! you are doing what men dared not attempt."

With a skill and strength not expected of one of his years, the gallant boy caught the swaying mast, and made it fast, the lieutenant ordering back several of the seamen who had been shamed into going to his aid.

Just as he was about to descend, another shot from the sloop came flying over the schooner, passing within a foot of the boy's head.

But he did not flinch, and instantly a cheer for his nerve was given him by the crew, who stood at quarters.

Deliberately the boy descended, and was going forward when the lieutenant called to him to come aft.

He did so, and the officer saw a boy of perhaps fifteen, with a dark, fearless face, and large, handsome eyes that seemed to look into his very soul.

"Well, my lad, I have not been long enough in command of this schooner to know all my crew yet, so I will have to ask your name?"

"Ned, sir," was the quiet response.

"Well, Ned, I will grasp your hand with a great deal of pleasure. You are a Cabin Boy, I believe, though I do not remember having seen you before?"

"Yes, sir, but I have been on the sick list the last two days."

"He caught cold, your honor, jumping overboard when we lay in Portland harbor, sir, after the nigger cook who had too much grog on board, and tumbled into the sea, sir," explained the old gray-haired boatswain.

"Ah! that accounts for it, and you have today performed another gallant act, so that, Ned, I'll have to report you as being fitted for a better berth than that of Cabin Boy."

"Thank you, sir: but the sloop is gaining," and Ned attracted attention from himself to the Englishman, who was indeed creeping up rapidly.

The young lieutenant was at once brought to a realization of his vessel's danger, and looked anxiously landward to try and discover some means of escape, for that the enemy would overhaul him, if he did not run his schooner ashore, was now evident.

"If I beach her, ten to one every one of us will be lost, for I know the dangers of this coast well. If I surrender, the war is just beginning, and we will have to remain in English prisons for long years perhaps," he said to his next officer in rank who stood by his side.

"If we fire signal guns, sir, would not a pilot be induced to come out?" asked the officer.

"No, I fear not, for I tried that some months ago in a much less severe blow than this, and they would not come off, so great was the danger they risked."

"And how did you escape, sir?"

"A girl dared do what men would not, and she carried us into the river harborage."

"It was certainly a gallant act, sir."

"It was indeed," and the young officer passed his hand across his eyes several times, and his face assumed a look of intense sadness, as though some memory of the past, not pleasant to recall, was brought up by his words.

"I would at least try the signal guns, sir."

"Very well, Heritage, clear away the starboard bow gun and see what good it will do; but I have no hope of success."

The lieutenant quickly obeyed, and soon the minute guns mingled with the roar of the thunder, the howling winds, the dashing waters, and the deep boom of the sloop's bow chasers.

But, though every eye searched the shore, not a boat was visible putting off.

On the schooner still stood, however, until her commander called out:

"Cease firing!"

The order was obeyed and the officer once again joined his commander, aft.

"Well, Heritage, I dare not hold on much longer, for we are running into the midst of reefs, so I will have to put about and surrender—an awful fate indeed when just starting forth upon our cruise."

"Indeed it is, sir, a fearful fate to overtake us."

"Well, I see no other course, for though I live on this coast, and once knew how to run the channel in a light wind, I would not dare attempt it in this fearful storm, for I am utterly at a loss to find any bearings I remember. It is dreadful, but there is no alternative. Stand ready to haul down the flag and go about!"

The order came in broken tones from the lips of the young officer: but, just as he uttered them, Ned the Cabin Boy glided to his side and said quickly:

"You could save the schooner, sir, if you had a pilot to run you into the river?"

"Yes, my boy," eagerly answered the officer.

"If you will trust me, sir, I will pilot the schooner," said Ned the Cabin Boy, "and thus save you from wreck or capture."

"Trust you?"

"Yes, sir."

"But, my boy, what know you of these waters?"

"I know them well, sir, for I live but half a mile behind yonder old ruined fort."

"Boy, your name?" and the young commander turned deadly pale.

"Ned Norcross, sir."

CHAPTER V.

THE YOUNG PILOT.

WITH quiet diffidence Ned the Cabin Boy had given his name; but he could not but see that as he uttered it his commander turned deathly pale, while a startled cry broke from his lips, and then he said hoarsely:

"No, no, you are not her brother."

The boy was surprised, and so was Lieutenant Heritage, who saw the emotion of his commander and heard his strange words.

But, as though realizing that he must control himself, the young lieutenant said quickly:

"Well, my lad, are you any relation to Widow Norcross of Pine Grove Cottage, over the hill yonder?"

"Yes, sir. I am the son of the one whom they call Elsie the Witch," was the reply, in a somewhat bitter tone.

"Ah! I have heard of you, my boy, and how well you know these waters, even on the darkest night, so I place you in charge of the schooner to run in, and if you save her you shall become a midshipman within the month, if my father has to sail to Washington to get you the berth."

The boy's eyes flashed with joy at this, and he at once sprung to the wheel, saying quickly:

"There is no time to lose, sir, for there is Gravemore Reef right off our starboard bow."

"Mr. Heritage, see that the men obey this lad, as myself, and let every assistance be given him, for he has shown what he can do, and I believe will save the schooner."

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the officer, and the necessary orders were given, while Ned Norcross, the young pilot, stood coolly at the helm, guiding the flying vessel on her way with a skill and nerve that won the admiration of all on board, and the envy of a couple of middies who stood near watching him.

Casting a hasty glance over his shoulder, Ned said quietly:

"The Britisher don't like the sea that the Gravemore Reef kicks up, sir, and is putting about."

"By Neptune, but you are right; but there comes a broadside as she wears around," cried the lieutenant, and following his words a torrent of iron came tearing down upon the little schooner.

Here a shot struck the bulwarks and sent a shower of splinters among a group of men, there another tore along the deck, cutting down several poor fellows in its path, and a third took the head off of the man who stood at the wheel with Ned the Cabin Boy.

"Quick, sir. I must have more aid to hard down the helm, to round Bayonet Reef," cried the young pilot, and the commander of the schooner himself sprung to his aid in the place of the fallen helmsman.

All eyes had turned upon the young helmsman after the first shock, but there he stood, calm and undismayed, while he said in the most indifferent tone, referring to the dead helmsman:

"It's lucky for the schooner it wasn't my head, sir, or she'd never have gotten round Bayonet Reef, which you see sticking up there astern."

"Well, man or boy, I never saw as cool a piece of humanity as you are, my lad," ejaculated the commander of the schooner, as he turned his admiring gaze upon the young pilot, who smiled at his words, and answered:

"Mother always taught me to be indifferent to danger, sir, and cool in peril."

"Ah me!" sighed the young commander, and he turned his eyes up toward the cliff, which they were now abreast of, and fairly started as he cried:

"Great God! there is Elsie, the Old Witch, now!"

"It is my mother, sir," answered the boy in a low tone of quiet rebuke.

With something strangely like a muttered oath, the lieutenant relinquished his place at the wheel to an officer, and quickly descended to his cabin.

That the young pilot knew the channel, dangerous as it was, and how to handle the schooner, notwithstanding the fearful storm, the crew soon realized, and they gazed upon him with increasing admiration as they stood at their posts, ready to obey his slightest command.

Having passed through the outer barrier of the reefs, known as the Gravemore and Bayonet, the schooner gained a position which threw an island between her and her enemy, which was now under storm-sails only, keeping off from the dangerous coast, though showing that it was not her intention of sailing away and leaving her coveted prize.

Once within the chain of islands, the schooner was safe, and ran like a race-horse along in the smoother water, heading toward the river a league above.

"Will you ask the lieutenant, sir, if he wishes to drop anchor in the river?" said the Boy Pilot, addressing Roy Heritage, the junior lieutenant.

The question was asked, and the commander came on deck.

He was pale and looked worried, but said:

"Yes; I wish to anchor in front of the Riverview Mansion."

Under the pressure of the gale the schooner swept up to the designated anchorage and hove to in a sheltered bend of the river, just as the sun set behind the hills.

"I will go ashore, Mr. Heritage, but I do not wish one of the crew to leave the vessel," said the commander, and he ordered his gig alongside.

"Pardon me, sir, but I can go to see my mother and sister, for I will return at any time you say," and Ned Norcross faced his commander, who started at the request, frowned, bit his lips, and said sternly:

"No, sir, I cannot permit one of the crew to leave the vessel, for my coming in here was unexpected, as I was forced to do so to avoid capture, and I may sail at any moment."

"With this sea, and the gale from the ocean, sir, it will not be possible to go out for some hours at least, and I will be back soon," urged the boy.

"I said no," was the almost angry reply, and the commander went over the side into his gig, and was pulled ashore.

Then Ned, the Cabin Boy, sought Roy Heritage, the officer in charge, and said:

"Can you not give me permission to go, sir, now the lieutenant is away?"

"You heard the orders, my lad," was the kind-hearted reply of the lieutenant, who could not but wonder at his commander's strange refusal to a boy who had just saved his vessel and crew to him.

"I am sorry, sir, for my mother and sister live just one league over the hill, and I could go there and back in a couple of hours, for I only wanted to see them and ask them to forgive me for running away to sea, and tell them that I am going to be a midshipman."

"My brave boy, I feel for you, and were it in my power I would grant your request."

"We have some little repairs to make, and we may have to lie here a day or two, and will if the Englishman remains in the offing watching us, and then you can see your mother and sister I know."

"I fear the lieutenant will not stay, sir, for, as he lives on this coast, he knows that there is a channel above two leagues, where he can run out at high tide with his schooner, and thus dodge the Englishman."

With this the youth went forward, and soon after Roy Heritage left the deck in charge of the next officer in rank to himself and sought the cabin.

"I will send for that brave lad and have a talk with him, for, as the gig has returned with orders from the captain to come ashore for him in the morning, I am half a mind to let him go to his home, if he will promise to be back during the dog-watch, when I will be on deck."

Calling a seaman, he sent for the lad, but soon word came back that he could be nowhere found on the vessel.

Then followed a most thorough search, but it was a fruitless one, for Ned, the Cabin Boy, had mysteriously disappeared.

"The plucky boy has slipped overboard and swam ashore to see those he loves."

"I only hope that no harm will befall him," said Roy Heritage as he returned to the cabin, after giving up the search for the young pilot.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RUNAWAY'S RETURN.

ELsie, the Witch, had eagerly watched the schooner running close inshore to escape her large pursuer, and she had been greatly in hopes that some of the fishermen of the coast were out on the islands and would put off to pilot the little cruiser in, when her guns called loudly for aid.

"If I had not so far to go after the shallop I would go myself and pilot her in; but I would be too late," said Elsie, and she anxiously watched the flight and chase.

At last she saw that the signal guns had ceased, and observing the schooner change her course directly for the channel, she cried:

"Ah! her commander is a bold one to attempt to run yonder channel without a pilot; but I

suppose he would rather wreck his craft than surrender her."

With eager eyes the woman then watched the vessel, beheld the English cruiser's broadside, and cried:

"He's a plucky officer who commands that schooner—there! he passes the Gravemore Reef, ay, and rounds the Bayonet; there certainly is a pilot on board that craft, for no man could guess at the channel in smooth weather, and few on this coast can run a keel through yonder reefs in this storm and not knock it to pieces."

"If he goes to leeward of the Needle and between the Sugar-Loaf and Watch-Tower Reefs, then will I know that he has a pilot on board and a good one."

Most anxiously she watched the schooner, unmindful of the howling tempest, until she saw her almost shave the Needle Reef in going to leeward of it, and then head for the narrow pass between the two rocks known as the Sugar Loaf and Watch Tower.

"Yes, she has a pilot on board, and there are but two on this coast that can run a vessel in that style, and those are my two children—no! no! I forget that my poor Nora is dead, murdered by one whose life I live only to make wretched."

"But it cannot be my noble boy Ned at yonder helm, for he went on a vessel bound to foreign seas."

"My eyes are too dim to see who it is, but I know of no man along this coast that could handle a vessel in these waters as Nora and Ned could."

"Ay, the fishermen all said that, and said, too, that my art of witchcraft aided them."

"There, the vessel runs into the river, and is safe; but the Englishman will blockade her, I see," and the wretched woman stepped back into the sheltered part of the old fort, and dropping upon her knees by a dismounted gun, dismounted by its own weight, for the carriage had rotted away, she burst into tears.

At last she arose, and the shadows of night were gathering quickly about her, causing the dreary place to look most weird-like and desolate.

But, unmindful of the spot so dreaded by all, she walked slowly away, taking the path homeward.

With downcast face she continued her way, walking seemingly by instinct in the path, and at last came in sight of her little cottage.

No light shone from the window to greet her, no voice welcomed her as she crossed the threshold.

Lighting a lamp she placed it upon a table, and threw some wood upon the fire to get her supper.

Then, while the kettle was boiling, she set the table, placing three plates, cups and saucers, as had been her wont always, even when her children were off at school, and which she had not broken through with, although one was at the bottom of the ocean, and the other supposed to be far away in foreign seas.

"Well, mother, I am glad to see that I am expected."

A cry broke from the poor woman's lips as the words fell upon her ears, and following them there bounded into the room the form of her runaway sailor boy.

He was dressed in the uniform of Uncle Sam's sailors, had a black silk neck handkerchief under his collar, tied with a seaman's knot, and wore upon his head a jaunty tarpaulin.

His clothes were now wet with salt water, for he had swum ashore, and in his hand he carried a bundle tied up closely in tarred canvas to keep out the damp.

But, all wet as he was, the poor mother clasped him to her heart, and cried:

"My boy, my noble boy! Now I know that it was you that stood at the helm of that schooner that ran so daringly through the channel."

"Yes, mother. I brought her in, and, for it, I am to have a midshipman's berth in the navy, for Lieutenant Douglass Elmore, the son of Judge Elmore, of Riverview, says so, and—"

The boy stopped suddenly, and with alarm, for a piercing shriek rung through the cottage, and his mother sunk all in a heap at his feet.

CHAPTER VII.

AT RIVERVIEW MANSION.

WHEN Lieutenant Douglass Elmore, the young commander of the schooner-of-war, Vigilante, sprung ashore upon the pier in front of his father's elegant house, he was met there by a gentleman of dignified air, and whose locks were whitened by the frosts of sixty years.

"Ah, father, it is you?" and the lieutenant

Ned, the Cabin Boy.

stepped forward in the darkness, and grasped the hand of his father, who said:

"Why, Douglass, my son, this is indeed an unexpected pleasure, for I had not thought to meet you as an officer of yonder pretty vessel, on board which I was going, to offer the hospitalities of my house to her commander."

"I am her commander, sir, for I was ordered to Portland, to take command of her two days ago, and was forced to run in here to-night, or be captured by a large English sloop-of-war that has chased me all day."

"Indeed! Well, you were lucky to escape him; but whatever wind blows you here I am glad to see you, so come up to the mansion with me and we will have a pleasant night, if the storm does howl without."

Douglass Elmore walked on up to the mansion with his father, and was soon seated in the library before a cheerful fire, for the evening was chill, while the servants were preparing a tempting supper.

The judge had asked him if he cared to ask any of his officers to join them, and had received a reply in the negative.

That something worried his son Judge Elmore was assured, especially as he ate but little of the delicious supper prepared for him, but drank rather deeply of the wine.

"When do you depart, my son?"

"In the morning early, sir."

"But Toby reports seeing the Englishman's lights as he lays to, evidently determined to blockade you."

"I shall go out by the narrow pass between the islands up the coast."

"But what pilot have you to take you that way?"

"The same who brought me in, sir; and you will be surprised when I tell you that he is a boy."

"A boy?"

"Yes, father, and his name is Ned Norcross."

"Ha! The son of that old Witch of the Haunted Fort?"

"Yes, sir."

"It was rumored that he had run off to sea about a year ago."

"Well, father, he is a Cabin Boy on board my schooner, and has within the week done three deeds of bravery, any one of which should get him a middy's berth."

"The boy had grit, the fisherman said, and has begun well; but I am sorry he is on your vessel, Douglass."

"And so am I especially sorry, father; and it is upon his account that I am anxious to run right out to sea, for I wish to get him the berth of a middy and have him ordered to another vessel before—"

The young officer paused abruptly, and the judge asked:

"Before what, my son?"

"First tell me, sir, has any event of importance taken place along the coast since I left?"

"Well, let me see. By the way, how did you leave your wife?"

"Well, thank you, sir."

"With her father in Boston, doubtless?"

"Yes, sir; but father, will you tell me if anything of a tragic nature has happened in the neighborhood since I left?"

"Let me see. Yes—Nick Wales lost his shallop while running in the other night, and one of his crew was drowned."

"Curse Nick Wales, his shallop and his crew, for what care I for him!" and Douglass Elmore sprung to his feet in an angry way and paced to and fro.

Judge Elmore eyed his son for an instant in a peculiar manner, and then said quietly:

"Was there anything that you expected to occur of a tragic nature, Douglass?"

"No, sir; I confess that I did not expect it. But there was something that did occur which I saw, and which, to my dying day, I can never forget."

"You refer to the suicide of that silly girl?" coolly said the judge.

"I refer, sir, to the taking of her own life by Nora Norcross."

"I saw her, Eola my bride saw her, and so did all on the deck of the vessel."

"All, too, heard her cry, but I heard every word she uttered, and now know that I drove her to her desperate act."

"It was the talk of the country about for some weeks, and rumor had it that you had broken her heart and cast her off, and I expected to have that old Witch down upon me to revenge her child; but she does not seem to care for her, they say, and what should you

care if the old hag's daughter was such a fool as to take her own life because you would not marry her?"

"I do care, sir, and I ever will; but let us drop the subject and refer to it no more."

"Now you see that I am anxious to get to sea, and get that boy in a good berth in the navy, before he knows that I am the one who drove his sister to her rash act."

"As he has been off at sea he does not know that I ever met his mother or Nora, and I do not intend that he shall until I can place him upon the road to fame and fortune, both of which he has in him to win for himself."

"Well, Douglass, you know your own business best; but as for me I would not give the girl a second thought, and I only hope that the old Witch will take it in her head to jump off the cliff too, or will tumble off some dark night, for I confess I dread her."

"Ay, father, and something tells me to dread her too, for I know that she did love Nora with all her heart," was the low reply of Douglass Elmore.

CHAPTER VIII.

NED TAKES AN OATH.

THE cry uttered by his mother, ever so brave and strong, and seeing her moan away at his feet, almost unnerved Ned Norcross.

But he quickly recovered possession of his faculties, placed the poor woman upon a lounge, exhibiting a strength in doing so that one would not believe a boy could possess, and then he bathed her face and rubbed her hands until she returned to consciousness.

"My poor mother: what did I say that hurt you?" said the boy, as Elsie sat up and gazed around her with a look of intense sadness.

But suddenly recalling that she, of all women, had shown such weakness as to faint, she set her lips firmly, her eyes flashed, and she became at once hard and stern.

"Mother, I must ask you to forgive me for running away from school; but I heard so much talk of a coming war with England, and knowing that I was a good sailor, even if I am a boy, I wanted to make a name for myself, that you and sister Nora would be proud of."

"So, mother, I shipped before the mast, to work my way up from the bottom round of the ladder, and to-day I am promised a middy's berth within the month."

"My brave boy, I will not condemn you for your act, for I know that your heart was set upon the life of a sailor."

"And you richly deserve the midshipman's warrant offered you, for you saved that schooner and all on board from capture; but the man who tries to befriend you is, you say, Douglass Elmore?"

"Yes, mother."

"How came you to serve under him?"

"A new schooner, the Vigilante, which I ran into the river, was fitted out from a larger vessel, and the crew ordered on board."

"Then the lieutenant was sent to her as her commander."

"And you like him?"

"Yes, mother, and they say he is a good seaman; but he would not let me come home to see you to-night."

"Ah! he refused you permission to come home?" sneered the woman.

"Yes, mother, and I felt hurt, for he went to see his father, and I promised that I would return within two hours."

"And then?"

"He refused to let me go, and when he went on shore I asked Lieutenant Heritage for leave, and he also refused; but it was not his fault, as he dared not disobey orders."

"What did you do then, Ned?" calmly asked the woman.

"I got my little package together, of some things I have for you and Nora; but where is Nora, mother?"

"I will tell you presently, my son; but go on with your story of how you left the schooner?"

"I wrapped the bundle there up so that it could not get wet, and watching my chance, slipped over the bows and swam ashore."

"In other words you deserted?"

"Oh, no, mother, for I will go back within an hour, just as soon as I have had one of your good suppers, and they will not know I have been away."

"Ned Norcross, you will never return to that vessel, except for one purpose."

"Oh, mother!"

"I mean it."

"And what is that purpose, mother?"

"To destroy her!"

The boy bounded to his feet in terror, while he cried in alarm:

"Oh, mother! what can you mean?"

"Just what I say, my son."

"You are a deserter from the schooner, and in time of war, so that you can be shot for desertion."

"No, no, mother, I only left her to come and see you and Nora," and the tears came into the eyes of the boy.

"Ned, sit down, for I wish to tell you where Nora is."

"She is at school, is she not, mother?"

"No."

"She does not seem to be here."

"She is not here, and more, she never will be again."

Her hand restrained him as he was about to spring to his feet again, and she continued in a deep, impressive tone:

"Ned, let me tell you where your sister is."

"Yes, mother?"

"You know well the Haunted Fort?"

"Yes, mother; but can she be there?" and the boy shuddered, for he held for the place also superstitious dread, especially at night.

"She is not there, Ned, excepting in spirit."

"Oh, mother! is Nora dead?" and the boy's eyes filled with tears, while his lips quivered.

"She is, my son; but hold! do not give way to grief, shed no silly tears for her, as she is unavenged."

"Mother! mother! what do you, what can you mean?"

"I mean, Ned Norcross, that she was murdered."

The boy was now nearly wild with excitement, and, as soon as he could command words he said hoarsely:

"Murdered! and by whom?"

"By one who lives in happiness, by one who revels in wealth, and is winning fame for himself, after the dark deed he has done."

"Mother, if you do not tell me all, I shall go mad."

"I will tell you all, Ned Norcross, and I will expect you to avenge your sister."

"I will, mother."

"I will expect you to swear that the man who murdered her shall be tortured bitterly for his crime."

"I do not mean that you shall kill him, for that would give him but rest; but I want him to live, that he may suffer anguish of spirit, and find life so intolerable at last, that he will be driven to suicide, that he will be driven by the terror of living to kill himself."

"Who is this man, mother, that has killed Nora?" asked the boy with strange calmness.

First, you must take the oath I demand of you to track him until you drive him to desperation."

"I will, mother, for no evil that I can bring upon him will atone for his act in murdering my poor sister."

"Here, boy, place your left hand upon this skull," and the woman held her hideous staff toward him.

Silently he rested his hand upon the ghastly skull.

"Now kneel!"

He obeyed in silence.

"Place your right hand upon your heart."

Ned Norcross did so.

"Close your eyes and raise your face toward heaven."

Again she was obeyed.

"Now repeat after me the oath which you must take."

"I will, mother."

Then in a low, sepulchral tone she began, the boy repeating after her in his clear voice:

"I, Edward Norcross, do here most solemnly swear by earth, sea and sky, to track to the bitter end, with every torture that I can inflict upon him and his, to bring anguish to his heart, the man whose base act caused the death of my sister, Nora Norcross, now lying at the bottom of the ocean."

"If I fail in one act, in keeping this oath, may Heaven desert me, and my life be a curse!"

"Now rise, Ned Norcross, for you have bound yourself by a fearful oath to avenge your sister."

"I have indeed, mother," was the low reply of the boy.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIRST BLOW.

HAVING made Ned the Cabin Boy take his oath of revenge, Elsie seemed perfectly content, and in a very cool way told him how Nora had died.

Ned felt the same poignant grief for his sister that he had before, that she had been driven to take her own life, and he read the fatal letter written by Douglass Elmore with feelings of deepest bitterness; but he was glad to see that the lieutenant had not, as he had at first feared, deliberately taken her life.

Still he was determined to avenge the beautiful sister whom he so much loved, and became, as it were, a tool in his mother's hands.

"Now, my son, you see that you cannot return to the Vigilante."

"No, mother, I cannot go back to the schooner," he said, sadly.

"You will not owe your advancement to that man?"

"Never, mother; my dream of rising to rank in the navy ends now."

"As you cannot return to the schooner, you naturally are a deserter."

"So it seems, mother."

"Well, are you ready to strike your first blow against Douglass Elmore to-night?"

"How can it be done, mother?"

"You said he was to return to his vessel to-night?"

"Yes."

"She lies at anchor in the river?"

"Yes, mother, just off the Riverview Mansion."

"There is plenty of water there?"

"Six fathoms, mother."

"If he loses his vessel it will hurt him with the Government, especially as he will have her taken while at anchor off his own home."

"If such was the case, mother, it would indeed hurt him."

"Such can be the case, Ned."

"I do not understand how, mother."

"The storm still keeps up, or at least it continues to blow half a gale?"

"Yes."

"But the wind has worked around so that it comes from the westward," and the woman stood for an instant in the door looking out.

"Yes."

"A vessel can run in and out of the channel without tacking with the wind where it is, can she not?"

"She can, mother."

"Could you run a large vessel in?"

"I believe I could run a ship of the line in, mother, for there is water enough, though the channels are narrow."

"Well, the shallop, your boat, lies in the cove, and she is in good condition."

"Mother, what can you mean?"

"How far off does the English sloop-of-war lie?"

"A league."

"You could run to her in the shallop in half an hour from the cove."

The boy made no reply, but began to see what his mother was plotting.

Then she continued:

"You must go out to her, Ned, board her, run her in and lay her alongside the schooner, so that she can capture her, and then stand to sea with the prize following in your wake."

"No, no, mother."

Without heeding his negative, Elsie went on:

"You can leave your shallop at anchor offshore, join her when you return, and get back here before daybreak, when I will have a secure retreat for you until the affair blows over, and we find that you are not suspected."

"Mother, is this your plot to strike the first blow against Lieutenant Elmore?"

"Yes; he will lose his vessel, and that will put him in a bad light with his Government, and he will likely lie in an English prison until the end of the war, and that will crush him."

"But the innocent must suffer with him."

"We must not think of them."

"But I cannot help it, and besides, mother, I am no foe to my own land, to thus aid England in seeking my own revenge."

"No, no; our Government needs all of her vessels, and I will not be the one to give to the English the schooner, even if Douglass Elmore does command her."

"You refuse, then, Ned Norcross, to do this?"

"I do, mother, for I will not become a traitor to my country to gain my revenge."

"Then I shall do the work," was the firm reply of the woman, and her son looked at her in horror.

CHAPTER X.

ELSIE AND THE ENGLISH CAPTAIN.

NED NORCROSS was fairly startled by the bold words of his mother, and could hardly believe that she meant what she said.

He was, though a boy in years, one who had been well taught, and precocious in a wonderful degree, he had an old head upon young shoulders.

His mother had sought to give him the best training, and yet her own weird life had influenced the boy and Nora in a manner that she could hardly have believed, for both of them regarded her as really being possessed of supernatural powers in a certain degree.

As Nora had grown older she had understood her mother better, and humored her in her weird freaks, which she looked upon as harmless and coming from a mind diseased.

But Ned had been away for a year past, and felt it his duty to obey implicitly.

Had his mother told him to return to the schooner and kill Douglass Elmore, he would doubtless have done so, regardless of consequences; but he shrank from aiding England to the detriment of his own land, and here Elsie found him as firm as a rock.

Perhaps it was that she felt a certain shame in asking it of him, that she did not urge it upon him, and determined herself to do the hideous work.

"Do you mean it, mother?" asked Ned in a low tone.

"I do, for I can run the channel by day."

"You can, mother, but not by night."

"I can with signals, Ned."

"You mean with fires on the cliff, and on Eagle Roost Rock?"

"Yes, fires there will give me my exact bearing."

"But, mother, there is no one to build fires there."

"I have done so for you, Ned, when you were out at sea on dark, rainy nights."

"True, mother, and they served me well, and I would need a light on Eagle Roost to-night if I was out."

"Well, you can return the favor for me, as I go out to the Englishman at once."

"No, no, mother, let me beseech of you not to do this."

"Silence! I am going, I said, and on your head be it if you let your mother be wrecked this night."

In vain did Ned entreat her not to go, to seek other means of revenge against Douglass Elmore; she was firm, and throwing on a stout storm-coat, she left the cottage with the words:

"You know, boy, that without the signals I will die."

He followed her down to the little cove where the shallop lay.

It was a little vessel of five tons, a thorough sea-boat, and had been the boy's pride.

She raised the sail, and then pushed off from the shore and took the tiller, for the wind sent her flying away from the sheltered nook.

Ned Norcross watched her until she rounded a point of rocks, and then he hastened to the cliff.

He shuddered as he stepped within the ruin, for the wind howled about it like the wailing of the voices of those who had been massacred there long years before, and he liked not the dreary spot.

But he stepped to the edge of the cliff and beheld the shallop flying along far below him, and heading out of the channel.

His mother was certainly an expert sailor, and she handled the little craft with consummate skill, and soon she was lost to the sight of the boy, as she reached the outer waters, which were tempest-tossed and white with foam.

But Elsie shrank not from the wild waters, but with her tiller held firmly in hand, her tiny sail reefed down and trimmed close, she headed for the lights of the vessel lying off-shore.

On board of the majestic sloop-of-war all was quiet, though a close watch was kept upon the channel, fearing that the schooner would run out to sea in the darkness.

The loss of the prize had been a sore disappointment to the commander of the English craft, and he had determined to remain off the coast until morning and then, if the storm abated, to send his boats in and capture the schooner, or secure a pilot that would run his vessel in.

He had merely thrown himself down to rest, with his clothes on, expecting to be called up, and was therefore not surprised when an officer entered his cabin and reported:

"A small shallop standing out toward us, sir."

"All right, Murdick, I will be at once on deck," was the answer.

Soon after the shallop was within hail, and the officer of the deck sung out:

"Ho, the shallop!"

"Ahoy the sloop-of-war," came the answer.

"What do you want?"

"I wish to come on board and see your commander."

"Ay, ay, come under our lee and we will throw you a line."

"No, I will anchor, and come on board in my skiff," was the reply, and a moment after the shallop's head swept up to the wind, the sail came down with a run, and a small surf-skiff was launched from her deck, and came swiftly over the rough waters toward the Englishman, a single occupant in it.

A gangway was lowered to seaward, and there stepped on deck, to the amazement of all, a woman.

She dropped her storm-coat as she reached the deck, and the battle lantern showed the weird form of Elsie, the Witch.

"I would see the commander of this craft," she said, sternly, holding in her hand her ghastly wand, from which the sailors shrank in dismay.

"I am Captain Lionel Drew, and wholly at your service, madam," said the English commander.

"I wish to see you alone, sir."

"Then pray come into my cabin," and Captain Drew gazed upon the strange being before him with feelings of intense surprise.

"Be seated, madam," he said, politely, placing a chair for her.

"No, I will stand, for I will detain you but an instant, sir."

"And pray how can I serve you, madam."

"I came to serve you, sir."

"Indeed!"

"I did, sir."

"May I ask in what way?"

"You chased an American schooner-of-war inshore about sunset?"

"I did."

"She escaped you by running a channel which you dared not attempt?"

"You are right, madam."

"You are lying off here in the hope of capturing her to-morrow?"

"Again you are right."

"You cannot do so."

"Ah! has she escaped to sea?"

"Oh, no, but she could run many miles up the river, and there is a small fort above, while there is but one person on this coast that you could get to pilot you in."

"Indeed! then that one person can make a snug sum if he will pilot me in."

"I came for that purpose, sir."

"You?"

"Yes."

"But you are a woman."

"What matters that?"

The Englishman gazed upon the strange creature in silence.

He had believed her from the first demented, and now he was convinced that she was mad.

"Yes, I am a woman," broke in Elsie, "and I have come to act as your pilot."

"But you cannot know the channel."

"But I do."

The Englishman shook his head.

"You saw my shallop that I came off in?"

"Yes."

"I brought her out here."

"But you surely have some man on board with you."

"I have not."

"You came alone?"

"I did."

"Then you must know the channel."

"There is but one who knows it better than I."

"And who is that?"

"The one who took the schooner in this afternoon."

"Ah! and he did it in a most masterly manner, for I watched him from the fore-cross-trees."

"He is but a boy."

"A boy?"

"Yes, my son."

"My dear madam you surprise me! and if the one who ran the schooner in, during the storm of the past day, is your son, I can well understand how you, after bringing the shallop off to-night, can act as pilot."

"I will take the shallop in, sir, lay her alongside of the schooner, where she lies in the river, pilot you out to sea again, with the American cruiser following in your wake, and resign my shallop, which I will leave at anchor, off here until my return."

"You are certainly a remarkable woman, and I will accept your offer: but what are your terms?"

"You mean my price?"

"Yes, how much gold do you want?"

"I do not want your gold, Sir Englishman."

"Ah! you cannot be an American to betray your country?"

"I am an American, and I hate England."

"Yet you serve her."

"I serve myself."

"But refuse my gold?"

"I work for more than gold in this case."

"Indeed! may I ask what reward you expect?"

"Revenge!"

"Hail now I have struck the key-note that gives the motive for your action."

"You have."

"You take great chances for revenge."

"I am content, sir: but I have a demand to make of you."

"Name it."

"That you will keep the commander of the schooner, Lieutenant Douglass Elmore, in irons, until you can send him to England, and that he is to be held as a prisoner, and not exchanged, until the war between Great Britain and the United States shall end?"

"This is a strange request."

"It is a demand, sir, in return for my services, and more, I ask the release of the other officers and crew as soon as they can be exchanged."

"Another strange request."

"One more and I have done."

"Name it!"

"That you do not tell who was your pilot, or allow your men to communicate it to the prisoners."

"I do not know myself, other than that you are a woman."

"Well, I am known as Elsie, The Witch of the Haunted Fort."

"You look it," was the blunt response of the Englishman.

Elsie did not appear to notice his words, but said:

"Now, do you agree to my terms, Sir Englishman?"

"I cannot place an American officer in irons, nor can I guarantee to hold him until the end of the war as prisoner; but I will send him a prisoner to England, asking that he be held as long as possible, and that his other officers and crew be exchanged at once."

"This is all that I can pledge myself to do."

"You are honest at least, to give no promises, for the sake of capturing the schooner, which you feel that you cannot fulfill, and so I will act as your pilot."

"I am glad of that, madam."

"We have no time to lose, for I must be ashore again with my shallop, before dawn."

"Now have no light visible upon your vessel, and put her under easy working sail only, and I will go forward and call back my orders from there."

"As you please: but for Heaven's sake be careful, for a noble vessel and over two hundred men are on your hands for life or death," said the Englishman as he led the way on deck.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WORK OF THE WITCH.

THOUGH Elsie was outwardly cool, she was at heart very nervous about the work she had undertaken, for she knew that she had a large vessel to handle in a hard blow, amid very wild waters, and to carry in safety through a dangerous channel even in a calm.

But she had determined to strike her first blow that night against Douglass Elmore, and she would not shrink from it.

Often had she sailed through the channel, and she knew it comparatively well; but now the night was dark, the sloop was large, objects on shore could not be singled out, all looking like one black mass, and a false move might destroy all, for to strike the rocks in that tempest-lashed sea, would be to go to pieces instantly.

Would Ned not aid her? was her constant thought.

He knew her danger, and should he not come to her rescue, she might wreck the vessel and have over two hundred lives to end with her own in gloom and despair, and to answer for.

But, with this terrible alternative staring her in the face, if she made a mistake, she was determined to do her best and trust in luck.

Going forward she took her stand upon the bows; but somehow she could see no better there than when aft, and she returned to the quarter-deck and said quietly:

"I will take the wheel, sir."

"You will need aid."

"No sir, I am strong enough to manage it, and if I need aid, I will ask it."

"Give her the wheel, men," ordered Captain Drew, and the wheelmen stepped aside.

The sloop was now headed for the shore, and, in spite of the little sail which she had set, was driving along at a great rate of speed.

Ahead all was darkness, and the waters were lashed into snowy whiteness.

Then was heard the thunderous roar of the surf, and the breaking, crashing of the waves as they were dashed upon the reefs.

Standing at the wheel, with the English captain upon her right, and several of his officers on her left, her long white hair streaming in the air, her wild costume fluttering in the winds, she was indeed an almost appalling being to gaze upon, and the English captain regretted that he had accepted her services as pilot, and calling his lieutenant to his side, said in a hoarse tone:

"Great God, Brantley, the Witch has the helm, and may be running the ship to Hades, for all we know, in this blackness and storm!"

This was not encouraging to the lieutenant, and the crew were crouching forward in dread, seeming to have the same fear that their commander had.

But straight on flew the stanch vessel, trusting her destinies to the weird being that was at her helm, though death and destruction were ahead.

"Am I right?" came in low tones from the woman's lips, as she tried to pierce the darkness ahead.

"Curse this blackness, I can see nothing, and yet I hear the roar of the sea breaking upon the Graveyard Reef, and it seems almost dead ahead," came from between the shut teeth of the woman.

This she said in a quivering voice, while those who listened could not hear, though they had heard her mutterings to herself:

"In another moment I will know whether we all die, for the boy has deserted me."

But, as she spoke, there suddenly flamed up upon the summit of the cliff, a bright blaze, and then broke from the lips of Elsie, these words:

"God forgive me for doubting my own flesh and blood!"

And not an instant too soon did the signal light flash forth, for the sharp bows of the vessel-of-war had been headed directly for Graveyard Reef.

Now their course was quickly changed, and with a calmness and skill that did not betray to Captain Drew and his men, how near they had been to death.

Past the reef like a race-horse, drove the stanch vessel, and then, a few hundred yards from the cliff, and upon the face of a bold wall of rock, burst forth another signal-light.

"Now I am safe, for yonder lights on the cliff and Eagle's Roost Rock, give me my bearings," muttered Elsie in joyous tones.

"What are those lights, madame?" asked the English commander, stepping up to Elsie.

"They are signals."

"Signals for what?"

"They are my light houses."

"Ah! to guide you?"

"Yes."

"Who kindles them?"

"My son."

"The same who was the pilot of the schooner?"

"Yes."

"Why did he not come out to act as our pilot then?"

"He would see you to the bottom of the sea first."

"Why say you so?"

"He is a true American, and would not serve a foe to the detriment of his own country."

"Yet he builds lights on shore to guide you in doing so!"

"He begged me not to come; but knowing that I did so, he built yonder fires to save my life, well knowing that without them I would wreck this vessel."

"Ha! you confess this?"

"I do."

"By Heaven, but you are bold, woman."

"I knew the boy would not desert me; now it is all plain sailing for me, but had he not aided me, you and your crew even now would have lost their lives."

The captain was about to make an angry reply, when Elsie said:

"Now do not annoy me, but call away your boarders, for yonder is the mouth of the river, and the schooner is not far off."

CHAPTER XII.

FOILED.

As Elsie had already brought the sloop into comparatively quiet waters, and reported the coveted prize as being near at hand, Captain Drew was not inclined to quarrel with her, but ordered the men quietly to quarters, and the boarders to stand ready.

A few moments after the schooner was sighted, and the wind was fair for the sloop-of-war to run alongside of her.

Under lessened sail, the Englishman was headed for the schooner, and then Elsie called to Captain Drew:

"Well, madame?" and the captain stepped to her side.

"I prefer your helmsman to take her now."

"Well?"

"I care not to be seen; but when you are ready to stand out to sea again, I will take the helm."

"As you please."

"May I retire to your cabin?"

"Certainly, and I will order my steward to furnish you with wine and refreshments."

"Thank you."

"And will call you when I need your services again; but who is to pilot the schooner out to sea?"

"She can follow close in your wake."

"It is hazardous."

"It cannot be helped."

"Will not one of her crew pilot us out?"

"Not one on board could do so, even if you found a traitor willing to undertake the work for a golden bribe."

"Well, she shall follow in our wake, and you now go to the cabin."

The woman relinquished the wheel to the two men and disappeared in the cabin just as a ringing hail came from on board the schooner in the voice of Lieutenant Heritage.

"Ship ahoy! What ship is that?"

No answer was returned, and again came the cry:

"What vessel is that? Answer, or I'll fire into you."

It was a plucky thing for the lieutenant to say, for he saw, even in the darkness, that the stranger was a vessel-of-war, and, following his threat, came rapid orders for the crew to turn out and spring to quarters.

But clear and ominous came the answer to the last hail:

"Her Majesty's sloop-of-war Sea Raven."

All was at once confusion on board the schooner, while the next instant the Englishman glided alongside, grapnels were thrown, and a hundred men sprung on board, pistols and cutlasses in hand.

Seeing that he had a foe to deal with, Lieutenant Heritage wheeled the pivot-gun aft around and fired it, just as the grapnels were thrown, and a charge of grape went tearing into the oaken side of the Englishman and cut down half a dozen men.

But it was the only gun fired from the schooner, and though the gallant lieutenant threw himself at the head of a score of his men, he could not stem the tide against him, and was driven forward and forced to surrender to the overwhelming numbers upon his decks.

Thus, in two minutes' time, a dozen noble fellows had lost their lives and the schooner was a prize to the Englishman.

"Lively, men, up with her anchor, set sail, and you, Brantley, take command of her and follow the Raven at once out to sea," cried the English commander.

"And the prisoners, sir?"

"Put the seamen in irons and confine them in the hold of their own vessel, while the officers keep in their own cabin."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"And be careful, Brantley, in following us out, that your helmsmen make no mistake, for you may lose your lives by it."

"I will take the helm myself, sir."

"All right; now I'll be off, for your anchor is apeak I see."

The English captain now returned to his own deck and the two vessels swung apart.

As they did so Elsie stepped to the helm and said quickly:

"It was a clever capture, sir."

"Yes, and with little loss, for we caught them napping; but the schooner's commander fought like a tiger."

"Ah, sir, was he slain?" cried the woman in alarm.

"No, he was not even wounded, though a dozen of his men fell around him."

"I am glad of that; but now we must be off."

for I have no time to lose to get back before dawn."

"The vessel is in your hands, madam."

"And the schooner?"

"Is ready now to follow."

The Sea Raven was now headed out of the river, and soon after was beating along the coast, in the narrow channel between the mainland and the island.

Close in her wake the Vigilante followed, Lieutenant Brantley himself at the wheel, and watching every movement of the sloop.

Half an hour passed before the pass out through the reefs was reached, and then, casting her eyes astern at the two signal fires, Elsie took her bearings and ran the English vessel safely through all dangers out to sea, the schooner following her every movement with a precision and promptness that proved that her commander knew well his danger.

Luffing up into the wind, when near the little shallop, Elsie's little skiff was launched and she was about to go over the side into it when Captain Drew said:

"You have served me well, madam, and I wish you would accept this purse as a reward."

"I have served myself as well, sir, and will not accept your gold."

"Good-by!"

With this the woman went over the side of the vessel, and soon after she was on board her little shallop, which was flying landward at a driving pace.

Until it entered the channel and was between the islands, the signal fires were kept burning.

Then they disappeared, the one after the other, and all was darkness.

But Elsie knew well her way then, and soon ran her shallop into the little cove, where she was joined by Ned.

"Well, mother, you accomplished your work of giving the Englishman the schooner as a prize," he said bitterly.

"Yes, and I am glad to see that you did not desert me, boy."

"No; I saw that you were going wrong, for I had my glass, and I lighted the signals; but you must hasten home, for the country is alarmed, and I fear the people would not spare you, even though you are a woman, if they knew what you had done this night."

"No, they would hang me as a traitress or burn me as a witch; but I have struck my first blow to-night against the murderer of my child, my son."

"And, mother, you have been foiled!"

"Foiled! What do you mean, Edward Norcross?" and the woman stopped as they were ascending the hill and turned almost fiercely upon him.

"Mother, as I was about to cross the highway coming here, two horsemen came dashing along."

"Well, boy?"

"I shrunk back in the bushes, and they did not see me; but I knew one of them, and heard what was said."

"Well, who were they, and what was said?"

"One said:

"Come, Kit, we must push our horses harder, if we kill them, for the Falcon was to sail today, and we must reach her before she does, so that we can head off this Englishman and make him a prize, if we do not retake the schooner."

"Well, they were two men riding hard to give the alarm to some American man-of-war."

"Yes, mother, but one of them, the one who spoke, was Douglass Elmore!"

"Are you sure of this boy?" and Elsie grasped his shoulder with a clutch he could not shake off.

"Yes, mother, for the lieutenant was in full uniform, and I know his voice well."

"He doubtless remained ashore at the Mansion to-night, and was not on the schooner."

"Foiled! yes, for this once, but my work is only begun, Ned Norcross, and you have not struck your blow yet," said the woman hoarsely as the two walked on together.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE INFORMER.

SEVERAL weeks passed away after the incidents related, of the capture of the Vigilante by the English sloop-of-war, and still the excitement among the people kept up at fever heat.

That some one along the coast had acted as pilot there was no doubt, and that they had gone off to her under cover of the night was also admitted.

It was whispered that a fisherman of the islands could tell a story, if so he wished, but just who this man was it seemed hard to find out.

Anyhow, several persons had seen fire-signals on the rocks that night, and whoever had been the pilot was a traitor deserving of instant death, was the unanimous opinion of all.

That Douglass Elmore had been fortunately at home that night, instead of on the schooner, was a subject of congratulation to many, and all praised his zeal, when he found that his vessel was a prize to the Englishman, in mounting his horse, and, accompanied by a neighbor, dashing away at full speed to alarm the American frigate Falcon, then anchored down the coast some twenty leagues.

The result of this midnight ride of the young lieutenant had been to send the Falcon to sea in hot haste, and have her come suddenly upon the British sloop-of-war Sea Raven, and, after a short but spirited action, force her to strike her colors.

But the schooner, which had been cruising near the Sea Raven when the Falcon rounded a point so suddenly upon them, made her escape, greatly to the joy of Captain Drew.

When a prisoner in the cabin of the Falcon, Captain Drew was closely questioned by Douglass Elmore as to who had been his pilot into the river.

"I decline to answer the question," haughtily said the Englishman.

"Then your officers must," hotly said Lieutenant Elmore, whom the American captain had allowed to question his prisoner.

"My officers, sir, will give you no information," was the reply.

"Then your men shall."

"Pardon me, but as an officer yourself, sir, I should think you would know that captains of vessels-of-war do not make confidants of their seamen."

Douglass Elmore bit his lip and answered:

"Some one on our coast has proven a traitor, Captain Drew, and naturally I am anxious to find out who it is."

"And naturally, sir, you cannot expect me to betray even a traitor who has served me well."

Douglass Elmore was foiled here, but he had captured, or been the means of capturing, the vessel that had taken his schooner, and this was some balm to his wounded feelings, and he was forced to rest content.

But upon arriving in port with the Sea Raven as a prize, the Falcon had hardly dropped anchor when a confidential servant of Judge Elmore boarded her with an important letter to the young lieutenant.

Hastily breaking the seal, Douglass Elmore read the letter, and then turned to the captain of the Falcon, and said:

"Here is good news, sir."

"Well, Elmore, let us have it."

"My father writes that, as I have lost my vessel, he incloses his draft with the amount blank, for me to purchase or build a better craft, and, after fully equipping her, to present her to the Government in the place of the Vigilante."

"That is handsome, certainly, and you'll get a captaincy upon it, my word for it," answered the Falcon's commander, and he rowed ashore with the young lieutenant.

As they left the landing on their way to the hotel, a seaman stepped up and confronted Douglass Elmore, while he saluted politely, and said:

"Pardon, lieutenant, but I am glad to see that the Falcon was captured the capturer of our pretty Vigilante."

"What, my man, were you on the Vigilante?"

"Yes, sir."

"When she was captured?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then how is it I find you here?"

"I jumped overboard, sir, as she went near an island in running out, and a fishing-smack took me off the next day and I made my way here."

"Well, we are the only two who escaped, that I know of: but tell me, have you any idea who it was that piloted the Englishman into the river?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ha! this is good news, my man, so out with it."

"It was a boy, sir."

"A boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"Nonsense!"

"No, lieutenant, it was the same boy who ran the schooner in."

"My man, you are away off your bearings there."

"No, sir, for, when you refused to allow the young Cabin Boy Ned to go ashore, he slipped overboard and disappeared."

"Is this true?"

"It is, sir, as you can find out by asking any seaman on the English sloop, if a boy was captured on the schooner?"

"I will return at once on board the Falcon and find out," and taking the seaman with him Douglass Elmore returned to the Falcon.

"Captain Drew, may I ask if you have any men who were with you on your vessel, that were among the prize crew of the schooner?"

"Yes, a number of them, for I threw more than a hundred on board that night, and withdrew all but fifty the next day."

"Thank you," and the young officer sought the men's quarters. "My men, I wish to speak with a man who was among the boarding party on the schooner, the night you captured her."

"There are plenty of us here who were, your honor," said a frank-faced Englishman.

"Was there a boy captured on board?"

"No, sir."

"You are sure?"

"I am certain, and how is it with you, messmates?"

"There was no boy on board, your honor," was the verdict of all.

"This man, one of my crew on the schooner—"

"Yes, I remember him, your honor, he jumped overboard next day and gave us the slip," said a seaman.

"Well, he tells me that a boy ran the Sea Raven in through the channel that night, and laid her alongside the schooner."

"He ought to know, your honor."

"Does he speak the truth, my lads?"

"We won't contradict him, your honor."

With an impatient imprecation, Lieutenant Elmore turned away, and said, addressing the American seaman:

"What is your name, my man?"

"Jack Desmond, sir."

"Well, Desmond, it looks as though you were right, and if so, that boy will hang for his act: but if it is the one I am led by your words to believe it is, it seems incredible."

"It was Ned, the Cabin Boy, sir," firmly said the man.

"But how can you account for his being on the English sloop?"

"He deserted the schooner, sir, and ran out in some small craft to the Britisher."

"But he did not remain on her, or he would be among the prisoners."

"No, sir, he left her outside, returning in his small boat to the shore, and more, there were signal lights shown on the coast for him to steer by, and this proves that some one was his ally."

"Signal fires! by Heaven, but my father speaks of such fires having been lit that night, in his letter to me, and also that a fisherman reports that a small shallop was seen running in and out.

"I will return home and find the traitor, as soon as I have arranged to get the vessel my father intends to present me with," and the young lieutenant hastened ashore again, his heart and brain full of conflicting emotions, while the seaman who had told him that Ned, the Cabin Boy, was the traitor pilot, after telling his commander where he could be found when wanted, walked off alone, muttering to himself:

"Now, Ned Norcross, I'll get you hanged, and through you I will strike at your mother's heart, for I have not forgotten you, Elsie Enders."

"No, no, and I never shall."

CHAPTER XIV.

SETTING THE TRAP.

In the cosey library at Riverview Mansion, sat Judge Elmore and his only son, in fact, his only child.

Douglass Elmore had just returned home after an absence of some weeks, and his father had warmly welcomed him back.

"Well, Douglass, what good news do you bring?" asked the judge.

"I have much to tell you, sir, for I reached the Falcon, and we captured the English sloop-of-war that ran off with my schooner."

"That much I heard rumored."

"But the Vigilante escaped us, sir."

"Well, the sloop was far more valuable."

"The Government has taken that view of it, sir, I am glad to see, for in answer to my letter, reporting the Vigilante's loss, and the capture of the Englishman, added to which I spoke of your generous offer, I was complimented upon acting promptly in the matter to retake my vessel, and told that I should take command

of the craft which your generosity provided for me, with a hint that a captaincy might soon follow."

"This is glorious, my son; but what have you done about a new vessel?"

"Well, sir, I found, by sending agents to Boston, New York, and even Baltimore, that I could purchase nothing suitable, so I ordered a three hundred ton schooner built upon a beautiful model, and no better vessel of her size will be afloat, and I trust that she will find no equals in speed.

"But I had to fill up the draft for a good round sum, father."

"All right, my son, I am content, and if she equals your hopes, your prize money will soon amount to considerable."

"Now, father, have you any news as regards who the traitor was that ran the Englishman in that night?"

"Nothing definite, my son, other than that a shallop was seen going out and coming in, and signal fires were built upon the cliff and the Eagle's Roost Rock."

"This is something, at least; but is there any one that dare go to the Haunted Fort at night, that you know of?"

"Only that accursed Witch; and, by the way, they do say that it was her shallop that was seen; but then she could not run out such a night and bring the Englishman in."

"So I would think, sir; but her son could."

"Her son?"

"Yes, sir, the Cabin Boy that was on board my schooner."

"It seems, as I would not give him leave to go home that night, that he deserted, and I am informed by a seaman, who escaped after the schooner was a prize, that he brought the English vessel in."

"By the laws of Moses! but this accounts for the shallop and the fires."

"How so, sir?"

"He was the pilot, and that old Witch was the one who lighted those fires."

"But, father, is she an Englishwoman?"

"I think not."

"Then what motive had she for aiding the English vessel?"

"I cannot see, other than— Ha! I have it!" excitedly cried the judge.

"Well, sir?"

"Revenge!"

The handsome face of Douglass Elmore turned slightly pale, but he said calmly:

"You mean revenge against me?"

"Yes, because her love-sick brat took her worthless life."

"Father, do not speak unkindly of poor Nora. But now that you give me the clew, such may be the case; and her son, returning home, was influenced by her to do as he did, for I do not think the boy meant to do wrong."

"They are all a bad lot, Douglass, and to be dreaded; and my advice is to catch this young scamp and hang him, and then, if the old Witch gives me any trouble, I will incite the people against her, and they will burn her as sure as I sit here."

"That would be terrible, sir; but I am determined to get at the truth of this affair, and to do so, will have the boy arrested as a deserter from my vessel and a traitor. But I will wait until I run down here in the spring in my new vessel, when, if he is guilty, I can string him up in the rigging for his crimes."

"Yes, and in the spring he will be gone."

"What, do you think he will not remain at home?"

"No, indeed, for he is no fool to stay here."

"But what can I do with him now?"

"Put him in the secret room of this house, and Caleb shall be his guard until you want him."

"A good idea, sir. But are you sure he is at home?"

"He has been seen about home, I know."

"Then he is there now, and I will send for Drake, the village constable, and his deputy, to come here to-night quietly, and they can go over and arrest him and bring him to the mansion."

"That will do; and Caleb can be trusted, so that no one will know that he is here, while you and Drake can go in the carriage to Boston, and it will be believed that he was taken there."

"A good plan, father, and I will carry it out to-night, for I confess, since you say that the Witch and boy meant to be revenged on me, that I will not feel easy until the boy is put out of the way and the mother frightened off."

CHAPTER XV.

A WITCH AT BAY.

CALEB, the confidential servant of the judge, was dispatched to the village for Drake the con-

stable and his deputy, and with orders for them to make their coming a secret.

They arrived in good season, and the judge explained to them that it had been discovered that Cabin Boy Ned, as he was known at sea, but Ned Norcross, the son of Old Elsie the Witch, was the traitor pilot who had brought the English vessel in to capture the schooner.

"Now, Drake, I wish you to go and get the boy."

"Is he at home, your honor?" asked the constable.

"Yes, I think so."

"And we are to lodge him in jail?"

"No, you are to bring him here, and I will keep him imprisoned in my house, until the arrival of a vessel-of-war, which can take him on board and try him."

"Yes, your honor, and they'll hang him too, if he's guilty, and I guess it'll be proven he is, for somebody is, and it might as well be the boy as any one else."

"You are right, Drake; now go to the cottage of the old Witch and get the boy."

"Will you go too, lieutenant?" asked the constable, turning to Douglass Elmore.

"No, but Caleb will accompany you."

"All right, sir, we'll be off; but I hope the old cat won't show her claws, for I'm just a least mite afraid of a witch woman."

"She'll not hurt you, Drake; but if she is violent, just arrest her and carry her to the village jail."

"Yes, sir," was the response of the constable, and after a stiff drink of good brandy all around, as a courage-raiser, the two officers and Caleb set off on horseback for the home of Old Elsie, the Witch, but with no joy in the prospect before them.

All was dark and silent at the cottage when they arrived, and dismounting from their horses they walked up to the little piazza and rapped.

"Well, what do you want here?" and the door was thrown wide open and a stream of light poured forth that nearly blinded the three men, so brilliant was it and wholly unexpected.

There in the doorway too they beheld the form of the Witch, clad in her crimson garb, with her crown upon her head, and her hideous wand held in her right hand.

"Good Mother Norcross," began the constable, faltering, advancing a step or two, for all three had fallen quickly back at the opening of the door; but he was interrupted with:

"Dare not to call me mother, you imp of sin, or I will touch you with my wand."

She held it toward him as she spoke, and he shrank back as from an adder, while he said:

"Certainly not, most holy Witch; but we are come to see you on business of importance."

She suddenly clasped her hands over her eyes, leaving the staff the while so that the crossbones touched her forehead, and in deep tones, as though reading their thoughts she said:

"You are come, men, to accuse my boy of a crime of which he is guiltless—"

"You are come to drag from me my boy, who, after long months at sea has come back to his home to visit his poor old mother—"

"You are come to take him away, to have him tried for his life, and hope to hang him at the yard-arm of a vessel as a traitor to his country."

"But you lie, he is guiltless, and those who accuse him know that he is innocent."

"Ha! ha! cowards, do I not read your thoughts and your mission?"

They shrank back appalled, for they felt that she did indeed read their thoughts, and for a moment they were silent.

But the constable felt that it devolved upon him to make a move.

It would never do for Caleb to return and tell the judge that he was afraid of the Witch, so he said:

"Well, with the question whether your son is innocent or guilty, I have nothing to do, Witch Elsie; but I have my orders to arrest him, and I have come to do it."

"You have come for him then to-night?"

"Yes; is he here?"

"He is."

"Then I shall arrest him."

She drew herself up to her full height, and holding the wand, the end with the hideous emblem upon it toward them, she cried:

"Begone, you hounds, or I touch you with my staff, and bring ill-omen upon your lives forevermore."

"Begone, I say, or rue the day your mothers gave you birth!"

She boldly advanced toward them, and every particle of courage oozed out from their hearts, and turning in terror, they precipitately fled,

sprung upon their horses and dashed away at full speed, hearing the mocking laughter of the woman ringing in their ears, until they were far away from the cottage on their return to Riverview Mansion.

CHAPTER XVI.

A VESSEL IN DANGER.

STANDING in the ruined embrasure of the old rock fort, the very afternoon before the visit at night of the constables and Caleb to the cottage of Elsie, was Ned, the Cabin Boy.

It was near the hour of sunset, and he was gazing out over the waters upon a vessel that lay becalmed half a mile off the island.

Not a breath of air stirred the waters, and the vessel rose and fell lazily upon the heaving bosom of the rippleless ocean.

It was a trim-built brig-of-war, and at her peak hung listlessly her colors, which Ned had made out to be the United States flag.

"She's a beauty," he said to himself as he stood admiring her.

"Trim and saucy-looking, and carries five barks to a side, and two pivots, one forward, the other aft, with a crew of ninety or a hundred men, I guess. She looks like a flyer in any breeze, and as though she could stand rough weather. Just such a craft as I would like to sail in as Cabin Boy, and aim to walk the quarter-deck before I left her!"

"Ah, me, how sad was the ending of my hopes, when I almost felt the weight of the straps on my shoulders, to find that I could not wear them ever. But I would not owe them to Douglass Elmore, the man who drove poor Nora to take her own life. Well, I may yet wear them, if I can keep my oath to avenge Nora."

"Ah! it looks as though we were going to have a blow, and if we do it will come from seaward, and yonder craft is just in the right place to be knocked to pieces."

For a long time he stood gazing upon the beautiful vessel, until the sun went down, and the shadows deepened.

Then she was shut out from his view, excepting the starboard light which met his gaze.

"There goes her anchor; she thinks she can ride it out there, but she is mistaken," he said, as he heard the splash of the anchor going into the sea and the running out of the cable.

After awhile there came to his ears the far-distant roll of thunder, and he said:

"The storm is coming up from somewhere, though the sky is cloudless now, and the sea as calm as the village mill-pond."

"Aha! I have it! there are other chances to rise, other vessels to sail in, than the one that Douglass Elmore commands, and I have half a mind to try my chances on yonder craft. Mother told me that she had found out by the stars that I was to be accused of bringing the English vessel in, and that they would hunt me down for it, so why stay here and let them do so when I am innocent? If she were accused, I would say that I did it and take the punishment; but if I run off they will feel that I am guilty and let poor mother alone."

"There, that storm is rising, and I will swim out to the brig and warn her captain. If he gives me a berth on board all right, and if he does not I can return home and await another chance."

So saying, the boy went back through the old fort, and following the ridge, descended by a narrow path leading to the water's edge.

He knew every foot of the way, although it was very dark in the pine forest, and arriving at the shore, took off his shoes and tarpaulin, and tying them in his kerchief, fastened it about his neck.

Then he sprang into the sea and started with bold strokes upon his long and perilous swim to the becalmed brig-of-war.

Swimming like a fish, Ned knew not what it was to tire of the exercise, and the distance he had to go in no way appalled him.

Reaching the island opposite the cliff, he walked across it, and entered the sea upon the other side.

He noticed that the lightning now became visible afar off, and the roll of distant thunder came to his ears louder than before, showing that the storm was approaching.

The brig was yet three-quarters of a mile distant, and the tide was against him, running in strong, which accounted for the vessel's having let fall a second anchor.

It then became a hard struggle for him, especially as he had to swim through waters that beat upon reefs and rocks here and there raising their ragged heads above the surface.

As he struggled through the foaming waters, then so wild, amid the rocks and yet off upon

the sea a short distance, so calm, the lightning became more vivid, and the thunder reached his ears, even above the roar about him, and he said anxiously:

"I must reach that brig before the storm strikes her, or she is lost."

With renewed efforts he struggled on and at last passed out of the seething waters about the rocks into the placid sea beyond.

The tide here did not run so strong, and he made good headway and soon came within close hail.

"Ho the brig!" he called out, and he could understand at once by the commotion on board that his hail was a surprise.

"Ay, ay! whereaway?" answered a manly voice.

"Overboard, off starboard quarter," was Ned's response.

"Ay, ay, sir! Come alongside and we'll throw you a line, or do you need help?"

"Oh, no; I'm all right, sir," cried Ned, and a moment after, dripping wet, he walked aft to greet the commander of the brig, who stood upon the quarter-deck amid a group of officers, anxiously awaiting the coming of one who had boarded them like Neptune from the sea.

CHAPTER XVII.

SAVED BY AN ENEMY.

APPROACHING to where the officers of the brig stood, Ned saluted politely, and was greeted with:

"Well, my youthful Neptune, is this the way you board one of His Majesty's cruisers?"

The voice was a pleasant one, and there was nothing unkind in it, but Ned shrank back with a sinking heart, for the words. "His Majesty's cruisers," told him that he had mistaken an English for an American vessel.

But he was determined not to show the white feather now, so answered politely:

"I swam out, sir, as the best means of reaching you under the circumstances."

"Ah! a young Yankee wanting a berth on board a king's vessel, eh?"

"No, sir: I do not wish a berth on an English vessel, for I am an American sailor lad; but I came to warn you of danger."

"Ha! this sounds well; but are we to be attacked by a flotilla of boats filled with the gallant Marine fishermen of whom we have heard so much?"

"No, sir; you need dread no such danger; but your vessel is in a most perilous situation."

"We have not found it so, my lad."

"You have not yet had reason to do so; but do you hear that distant thunder?"

"I do."

"Well, sir, storms on this coast are to be dreaded by the best pilots, and where you now lie so quietly at anchor, will be in an hour or two, one of the most dangerous points offshore."

"You talk knowingly, my lad."

"I live yonder on the coast, sir, and know these waters well."

"And yet you are a mere boy."

"Yes, sir, I am only a boy."

"And knowing our danger you came out to warn us?"

"I did, sir."

"It was noble of you indeed, my son: but from whence did you come?"

"Did you notice a lofty cliff, sir, almost abeam of you, with a dismantled fort upon it?"

"Yes, we were admiring it before sunset."

"Well, sir, I stood there and saw your danger, and observing that we were going to have a blow I determined to warn you."

"And you mean that you swam out from there?"

"Yes, sir, I swam to the island, walked across it, and then swam on out here."

"You are indeed a bold swimmer, and a most plucky lad; but why did you not come in a boat?"

Ned did not wish to tell how he deemed the vessel an American brig, and so said evasively:

"A boat would have been seen, sir, and it would be said that an American boy was aiding an English foe."

"Ah! that sounds well: but you came to the aid of a foe nevertheless, you say."

"I would not see an enemy dashed to pieces, sir, when I could prevent it, though in battle I would do all in my power against you."

"Chadwick, what flag had we up at the peak when we came in here this afternoon?"

"The English colors, sir, until we became becalmed, and then I raised the American flag, but it hung listless and could not be seen," answered the lieutenant whom the captain had asked the question.

Ned had not seen the brig come in, so said nothing, and the surmise among the officers was that he knew her to be an English vessel.

"You are a noble fellow, my lad, and you shall be rewarded for your services; but how can we get out of the scrape that you say we are in?"

"If there was any wind I could run you into a place of safety; but as it is, you will have to lie here until the storm breaks, and then I can pilot you to a safe anchorage."

"What! do you mean it?"

"Yes, sir."

"That you can run this vessel in a storm through the desperate-looking channels to landward, into an anchorage where we will be safe?"

"Yes, sir," and Ned spoke firmly and modestly, while one and all gazed upon him with commingled admiration and amazement.

The boy bore the scrutiny calmly, and then the brig's commander asked:

"Is there no other alternative, my lad, than to take such fearful chances?"

"Yes, sir."

"Name it."

"You can get your boats out, sir, and, as the tide is running in strong, I can pilot you under the lee of yonder island, where is a safe harbor, and you can ride out the gale, no matter from where it breaks."

"A better plan by far."

"But you have no time to lose, sir, as the tide will not hold long in your favor."

"You are a born sailor, my boy. Here, Mr. Chadwick, get the boats out ahead, and Mr. Newton, run up those anchors in a hurry, for that storm is coming up with a vengeance; and you, my gallant young pilot, go with me in my gig ahead, and show us the way."

The orders were rapidly obeyed by the crew, and ere long the brig began to move shoreward, borne by the tide and towed by the boats, and ahead in the gig Ned led the way.

Safely through the dangerous channel already known to the reader in all its perils, the brig passed, and a safe anchorage was found under the lee of an island, where was a sheltered cove.

And not by any means too soon did the brig reach the haven, for the storm came rushing down from seaward, and all on board realized that they would have been caught by the tempest and dashed to destruction upon the rocks, had it not been for the brave boy who had come to their rescue.

At an early hour the following morning the brig stood out to sea, Ned in a middy's jacket and cap at the helm, to shield him from any curious eyes that might be watching him from the shore.

The schooner's course lay toward Portland, and as Ned asked to be put ashore, the captain's offers of advancement in the British navy being firmly but politely refused, a small coast shallop was given chase to, and being overhauled, the gallant boy was put on board, the officers grasping his hand at parting, and wishing him good luck through life.

The captain's generous offer of a well-filled purse of gold, Ned had persistently refused to accept, greatly to that officer's regret.

"Here, my men, set this young gentleman ashore as soon as possible, for he is under orders, and this will pay you for your trouble, and the freight we gave you," and the captain tossed to each of the three men on board a few pieces of American gold.

"Lordy, cap'n, but you is gen'r'us, sir, and we'll do as you say, and set the middy ashore in Portland city, where we is going; but we'd never hev run from you, sir, if we hadn't thought you was a Britisher," said the shallop's skipper.

"Why, don't you know your own flag, my man?" asked the English officer, pointing to the peak where the United States colors were waving.

"Yes, sir, we knows the dear old gridiron well; but there's a good many wolves prowlin' round now in sheep's clothing, and your rig hain't American."

"Very likely, skipper, for this craft was built in England," said the captain, with a smile.

"Well, sir, I'm glad she has been captured,

sir, and may you captor a British frigate next. But we'll look after the middy, sir," called out the skipper, referring to Ned, who had been dressed up in a reefer's suit for the occasion.

A moment later and the shallop and the brig were bound on different courses.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SAD TIDINGS.

NED held himself aloof from the crew of the shallop until he felt convinced that they did not

suspect him of being other than he had been represented to be by the British commander, and then he entered into conversation with them.

He found that they hailed from a small seaport some leagues down the coast from where he dwelt, and that they had sailed some days after he had left home, for the English brig had cruised along slowly, watching for American vessels.

Asking casually if there was any news of interest along the coast, the skipper answered, in a tone that showed he was glad that he had something to tell:

"Waal, young mister, thar don't be any stirring tidings along where we lives; but thar has been considerable news of a newsy natur' up in ther neighborhood o' the old fort."

"What old fort?" asked Ned, deeply interested.

"The old pile o' ruined rocks they call the Haunted Fort, and I guesses it are haunted some considerable from what folks says."

"What is the news up there?" asked Ned, breathlessly.

"Waal, you see, they have got a live witch up in them parts."

"A witch?"

"Fact, mister, and she is a scarer, you may bet."

"Who is she?" and Ned's voice quivered as he asked the question.

"They call her Elsie the Witch, and say that she lives in the Haunted Fort or thereabouts."

"What has she been doing?"

"Waal, I couldn't git at it exactly; but I was up in thet neighborhood to see my aunt who lives nigh thar, and as she's well-to-do and other kin, it is right that I should be 'tentive to her, for she's gitting along in years."

"So I visits her once a year, and generally takes her some leetle presents and—"

"But what about Elsie the Witch?" impatiently asked Ned.

"Ah, yes; I was a-coming to her after I told you about my old aunt."

"Waal, I heerd that she had a son what she accused somebody, some jedge, I believes, of killing or making way with, and she begun to cast her spells around, and the jedge had her arrested and put in the village jail, and the folks thereabouts was talking serious of burning her at the stake for a witch when it comes on some saint's day, I believes—but what ails you, young mister?"

"Nothing," and Ned passed his hand across his face wearily.

"I guesses you had a spasm o' sea-sickness—the changing from the brig to the small boat, for it does cause one to git riled up, and even old sailors at times feels it."

"Yas, you is sea-sick; for you is white as a fish."

"How long will it take you to reach Portland?" asked Ned.

"We'll run in shortly after midnight, I guesses."

Ned made no reply, but walked forward, and thrusting his hand into his pocket, he jerked it out as though something had stung it.

Again he thrust it in, and this time drew out a silk purse heavy with gold.

Attached to it was a slip of paper, upon which was written:

"My brave boy, do not feel offended because I, who have plenty, have forced upon you, who, I am sure, have little, this small return for your services to me and to my vessel."

There was no signature, and opening the purse the boy found that it contained several hundred dollars.

"This is indeed luck," he said, "for I had not enough to carry me home."

"Now I can soon return, and you, my dear mother, shall not long remain behind prison bars, I promise you, for in some way will I set you free—ah! I have a bright thought, and this gold will help me carry it out, and I bless you, noble captain, for your kindness," and Ned paced to and fro in deep thought until the shallop glided into Portland harbor and he was landed upon Commercial wharf, when he rapidly turned his steps up into the city.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN EVIL SPIRIT MAKES A VISIT.

THE story told by the skipper of the shallop was true, for Elsie the Sorceress had really been arrested and thrown into the village jail, where indeed rumors were floating around that she would be burned for a witch.

The night that the constables and Caleb had fled in terror from her, was the one on which

Ned had swum out to the brig which he had believed to be an American.

Elsie had believed him to be at the old fort, where he generally kept himself, and so felt no anxiety regarding him.

As soon as the officers left, she had hastened on after them to the home of Judge Elmore, going by a near path over the hills which horses could not travel, and securing a position where she had before stood and listened to what had taken place in the library, she heard the stories of the constables told and over again, and each time embellished, for they had her appear in a most startling form, and fire burst out of the sockets of the little skull upon the end of her wand.

When they had been told to go, they swore that they could not move until she took her spell off of them, and then they departed in considerable haste.

Those were the days of superstition, kind reader, and even the learned judge and his son were impressed by the stories told by these emissaries, though they took them with a grain of allowance.

"Well, Drake, I will go over with you in the afternoon, and we will arrest this bag," said the judge.

And so it was settled to the great discomfort of the officers, who rode back to the village that night with fear and trembling, while Elsie trudged homeward through the storm, which now had broken over land and sea, seeming to care little for the buffets of the elements.

Arriving at home, and not finding Ned there, she had become alarmed about him, and hastened at once to the ruined fort.

All was dark and desolate there, while the wind howled mournfully through the old ruin.

"Ned!"

She called the name in piercing tones, and the winds howled back only the echo in her teeth.

"My boy! my son!"

Again she called, but no answer came.

Knowing the ruin well she went through it in search of her boy, but, as the reader knows, without finding him.

Then she became alarmed in earnest, and hastened back to her home to find he was not there, as she had hoped.

Through the night she sat up and watched, and with the dawn began her search in the pine forest.

To the spring she went, then to the meadow, and at last to the cove.

There she found the shallop, the surf-skiff, and a little cat-rigged sailboat, so that she knew Ned had not gone that way.

Returning to the cliff she saw the British brig sailing away down the coast, but did not connect Ned's disappearance once with her.

By the light of day she searched the ruined fort, and then gave up her boy as lost.

"They have entrapped him in some way, I know," she said.

Almost broken down with grief, she returned to her cottage, and throwing herself down upon a lounge, sunk into the sleep of exhaustion.

She was awakened by a rude grasp upon her, and springing to her feet found herself in the clutches of three men, while a fourth confronted her and sternly ordered:

"Put the irons on her, Drake!"

The speaker was Judge Elmore, and those he addressed were the two constables and Caleb.

They had caught their game asleep, and thus had rescued her.

To their surprise she uttered no curses upon them, but smiled grimly as they led her away.

"Take her to the village jail, Drake, and there keep her," ordered the judge.

"Yes, sir, if her black cat does not let her get out."

"My word for it the Witch will stay behind the bars," said the judge with a laugh, as he mounted his horse to ride away.

Then Elsie spoke:

"Judge Elmore, where is my son?"

"Woman, that is just what we wish to find out, for he is a deserter and a traitor."

"I fling the lie in your teeth, Emmet Elmore, for you know that my son is no deserter, or traitor."

"But he is missing from his home, and I believe that you have spirited him away to kill him."

"You are mistaken, for if I knew where he was, he should go with you to jail, and if I can find him, you may expect him there to join you soon," and the judge rode away, accompanied by Caleb, while the two constables departed for the village with their greatly-dreaded prisoner.

The jail was not a very extensive affair, for

it consisted of a stone house two stories high, the first floor being occupied by the jailer and his son, and the second floor of four rooms, was reserved for prisoners.

It stood off by itself on one edge of the village green, and was gazed at with holy awe by the innocent folk of the place.

It was tenantless at the time of Elsie's arrest, so that she became the only occupant of the cells, and she was given the best room by the jailer, who seemed most anxious to curry favor with a witch.

Hearing of the arrest of the dreaded woman, the villagers passed rapidly by to get a glimpse at her; but she kept herself out of sight, unmindful of the rumors that she would yet be burned as a witch, and which some few people seemed anxious to circulate, so as to stir up others to urge on the deed.

For some time had Elsie been in her prison, with no hope of release, and the jailer and his son had begun to believe that she possessed no power accredited to her, as she did not make her escape, when one night as they sat at their supper, a call came at the gate.

"Who is it?" asked the youth, before unbaring the gate.

"Dominie Dunt," was the answer, and the young man hastened to unbar the portal, for the village parson was an important character.

But, when the gate flew open, there strode through it an object that fairly froze the marrow in the bones of the aspirant for his father's shoes as jailer.

It was a slender form, clad half in red, half in black, with a long forked tail, coiled about one arm, and horns coming out of either side of his head.

The lower part of his face was black, the upper part red, his teeth showed plainly in a deathlike grin, and his feet and hands seemed to be armed with claws.

In one hand he held the wand of Elsie, the Witch, or one very like it, and he strode boldly in, leaving the frightened boy lying on his back, playing a tattoo with his heels upon the ground in a vain effort to scramble to his feet and dart away.

Straight to the jail walked the evil spirit, and one glance the jailer took at him and collapsed.

Then the hideous visitor ascended to the second floor, the door of Elsie's room was thrown open and a voice said:

"Quick, mother, for I have come for you."

"Ned, my son! can this be you?" and the woman sprung toward him.

"No, I am an evil spirit, the devil, or anything you like, until we get out of this."

"Come, now, for I have frightened the wits out of the jailer and his son."

Without a word more Elsie followed him, and the two passed out of the house together, the jailer and his son being nowhere visible.

CHAPTER XX.

NED'S FELLOW-TRAVELER.

THE plot of Cabin Boy Ned having been made known to the reader, as also the successful manner in which he carried out the character of an evil spirit, nearly frightening the jailer and his son into fits, I will now speak of a fellow-traveler whom the boy had with him in the stage, which then ran out of Portland through the village near the Haunted Fort.

At one place on the way, and upon descending a steep hill, the four horses became unmanageable and dashed away at breakneck speed, threatening to demolish the coach and kill the driver and the two passengers.

Through the ordeal Ned sat perfectly cool, as did also his companion, and when at last the driver checked his team at another hill, the gentleman who sat by the boy's side said, bluntly:

"You are a cool one, youngster, in danger."

"I have been in danger often enough, sir, to become accustomed to it," was Ned's reply.

The stranger was a man of fifty, perhaps, with gray hair, a long full beard, and a face that was stern, yet most prepossessing.

He was dressed well, and had about him the air of a seaman.

This little episode broke the ice between the two, for though they had ridden for hours together, the only ones in the coach, the stranger had not noticed the youth before.

Now, however, he appeared in a genial mood, and asked:

"Do you live in Maine?"

"Yes, sir; my home is on the coast, at a point near the Haunted Fort, of which you may have heard."

"Yes, I know it well, and have an acquaintance living not far away from there."

"His name is Judge Elmore; perhaps you know him?"

"I have met him, sir, but he is very rich and I am poor."

"Ah! he is very rich then?"

"Yes, sir; he is said to be immensely wealthy."

"Well, it is a good thing to be rich in this world; but you are a sailor are you not, for you have that look?"

"I am, sir."

"May I ask your name?"

Ned was half-inclined not to give his real name, fearing the stranger might go to the village and speak of him in some way, thus destroying his little plot to dress up as an evil spirit and rescue his mother.

But he did not wish to sail under false colors, so said frankly:

"My name is Ned Norcross, sir."

Instantly the stranger turned and looked him full in the face, while he said:

"What a coincidence, for my name is Norcross."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes; but of course we cannot be related, as I have few kindred, and no one of my name living in Maine."

"Have you a father?"

"No, sir; my father is dead."

"And your mother?"

"She is living."

"And is that all that there are in your family?"

"Yes, sir, though I did have a sister Nora, who met with a sad fate some time ago."

"Ab!" and the stranger showed such interest, rather than curiosity, in the matter, that Ned told him how his sister had taken her own life, even telling the reason.

"This is sad indeed, and I should think that you would feel revengeful toward the young man who deserted your poor sister as he did."

"I do, sir," and Ned's eyes flashed fire.

"He will find you a dangerous foe if you meet him, I think, even though you are a boy."

"I have met him, sir, and he was to have promoted me to a midshipman's berth in the navy; but then I did not know what he had done."

"So he did not give you the middy's berth?"

"I would die rather than accept a favor at his hands; oh, no, I could not do that. We are bitter foes now, and he is hunting me down, accusing me of acts of which I am not guilty and would scorn to commit."

Ned spoke warmly, and the stranger, becoming more and more interested in him, learned that Douglass Elmore, the son of his old acquaintance, the judge, was the boy's hated foe.

"Indeed! Lieutenant Douglass Elmore, of the navy, is the young man who has upon his conscience your sister's life?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, he has much to answer for; but tell me, my boy, is there no quiet place in the neighborhood where I can stop for a few days?"

"The village tavern is well spoken of, sir."

"No, I care not to go there, but to some quiet farm-house or fisherman's cot."

"I expect there are places where you could go, sir."

"Why can you not entertain me for a few days, for I will pay liberally for it."

"Your money, sir, I would not accept, but the truth is my mother is not at home, and I am all alone at the cottage."

"Don't mind that, for I am an old sailor, and can put up with any thing, and the fact is, lad, I am here on private business, and wish to keep my presence here a secret."

"Yes, sir."

"As you have been confidential with me I will be with you and tell you that I am here to attend to a little matter that will bring trouble to some one, and I wish you to help me."

"I will do what I can, sir, if you are in the right."

"I am in the right, my boy, as you shall know."

"So now I will expect you to make me your guest."

"If you will put up with our house as it is, sir, I will; but I am in trouble myself, and may get into more, for I will tell you frankly that they have arrested my mother, whom they call a witch, and they shall not harm her, if I can help it."

"Well said, my boy; but your mother cannot be much of a witch with such a son as you are. What! is here where you leave the stage?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I am to go with you?"

"Yes, sir, if you wish."

"I do," and calling the driver to a halt they seized their carpet-sacks and started up a hill-side-path on foot, the stranger clinging to his luggage as though it was valuable, and Ned clutching his with a grim smile, as he thought of the disguise inside and the surprise he would give the village jailer.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SHALLOP SETS SAIL.

ELSIE, the Witch, was not asleep, when Ned made his daring entrance of the jail, under cover of his frightful disguise, which he well knew would give him free admission and no questions asked.

She was seated at the window of her room, overlooking the yard, and it was just light enough for her to discover that some circumstance of importance was happening in the court below her.

The light streaming out from the open door of the building fell upon the assistant jailer on his back, and a most satanical-looking personage stalking over him toward the house.

Then followed the wild yell of the jailer himself, and next was heard the rattling of keys and her door was thrown wide open.

She had been brooding over her absent son, his mysterious disappearance causing her to believe that he too was to be lost to her forever.

Now, the hideous personage she suddenly saw enter, and with no dread of him, called out quickly:

"Mother, it is your boy Ned, and he has come to rescue you."

"Quick! for we have no time to lose."

She sprung toward her son, and silently unfolded her arms about him in one embrace.

Then she said calmly:

"I am ready, Ned."

Out of the jail they made their way, without let or hindrance, and then rapidly walked along toward their lonely cottage.

"Ned, where have you been?" asked the mother, after they had trudged along for some time in silence.

In a few words Ned told his mother all that had occurred, and then added:

"And, mother, on my way back in the stage I met a gentleman whom I took to immensely."

"We talked together a great deal, and I found out that his name was Norcross, too."

"Indeed! where is he from?"

"I do not know; but he said he came up to this part of the country on private business, and asked me to let him remain at the cottage during his stay."

"And what did you say?"

"I told him that he might do so, and so he has been keeping bachelor's hall with me since I came back."

"Ah, Ned, I don't like strangers in my house."

"But he does not seem like a stranger, mother."

"And then he is so kind and gentle, and he dressed me up for to-night's work, and didn't he make a good devil of me, mother?"

"Assuredly he did, Ned; but did you tell him what you intended to do?"

"I did, and he said if I did not succeed, he would to-morrow night take you out of jail himself."

"You do not know what has brought him here, Ned?"

"No, mother; but he has gone off alone several times, and said to-night that he might have to leave suddenly."

"He spoke of Judge Elmore, and I think has been there, for he said that the lieutenant had returned to Boston to bring his wife back here for the winter."

"Indeed! then she shall know just what kind of a man she has married."

The last part of Elsie's words were muttered to herself, so that Ned did not catch them.

After a rapid walk of several miles, the mother and son came in sight of their little cottage.

A light was visible burning in the little sitting-room, and Ned said:

"I guess we'll find the gentleman in there reading."

But he was mistaken, for the room was vacant.

But upon the table, where the light of the lamp shone full upon it was a slip of paper upon which was writing.

Hastily Mrs. Norcross seized it, and read aloud:

"MY YOUNG FRIEND NED:—I find that I shall have to go to Boston on some important business, so I leave hastily to catch the stage as it goes down to Portland to night.

"I am engaged in some work which you can greatly aid me in, and I will be glad to have you come on to Boston and join me there in one week from to-night at the Bull's Head Inn.

"As I do not know how you are situated in regard to funds, I leave you some gold for your expenses, and I promise you that in serving me you will serve well yourself, so do not fail to come.

"I trust and believe that you will rescue your mother; but should you not, a letter which I have written to the dominie of the village will prevent any harm being visited upon her for the present at least.

"But, should she be released by you, advise her to seek refuge in the Haunted Ruin, for there no one will dare seek for her. Yours,

"NORCROSS."

"Well, this is a strange letter, Ned."

"Yes, mother."

"And somehow the writing seems to have a familiar look to me; but the man must have influence, as he says that a letter he has written to the dominie will protect me."

"And, mother, you had better go to the Ruined Fort, for I shall depart at once to join him in Boston, and go in the shallop, so that folks will think we have both departed in the boat."

"It is not a bad idea, Ned, but I dislike your going away from me."

"It is for the best, I feel, mother; so let us get what things you will need and carry them to the fort, and I will have to take some provisions with me in the shallop."

The preparations were soon made, for both the stay of Elsie in the fort, and the run of Ned to Portland, and two hours after the shallop stood out from the shore with the boy sailor at her helm, while on the cliff, watching her until she faded in the gloom, was the fond mother, praying for the safe return of her idolized son.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SAILOR LOVER.

THE Bull's Head Inn was at the time of which I write, an hostelry where the better class of seamen found a home when ashore.

Naval officers, privateersmen, merchant captains, and shipping men generally made their quarters there, and received accommodations according to their capacity for paying for them.

That Mr. Norcross, the fellow-traveler in the stage with Ned, the Cabin Boy, was not unknown there, was evident from his cordial reception by mine host at the Bull's Head, who greeted him warmly, and at once ordered:

"Number Three for Mr. Norcross, Sam, and see that he has every attention."

"Number Three" was one of the roomiest and pleasantest chambers in the house, situated in a quiet wing of the building, and furnished in a home-like way that made it very inviting.

Mr. Norcross seemed too to feel perfectly at home in Number Three, and after a short rest descended to his dinner, which was a most tempting repast.

"Should any one call for me, Benedict, have them come directly up to my room," he said to the landlord.

That evening a personage called at the inn and asked:

"Is Captain Norcross stopping here?"

"He is."

"I would like to see him, please."

Seeing that the man was a sailor, the landlord said:

"He is in his room, and the servant will show you up."

A moment after the seaman knocked at the door, and upon an invitation to enter did so.

Captain Norcross, as he had called him, was seated at the table reading over some official-looking papers, and half-arose as his visitor entered.

A look of disappointment crossed his face as he saw who it was, for he had evidently expected a different visitor.

"Well, my man, do you wish to see me?" he said pleasantly.

"That is what I came for, sir."

"Then tell me how I can serve you," and Captain Norcross motioned to a chair, while he resumed his own.

"I am a poor man, sir," said the seaman.

"And a sailor?"

"Yes, sir."

"And need a berth?"

"No, sir. I have served for long years now, and been knocked around pretty hard in my time, when I was born to better luck."

"Well, what is it you want of me?"

"I need rest for a while."

"I fear I cannot serve you."

"You are just the man who can."

"In what way?"

"You are rich and I am poor."

"Well, if you are ill I will help you; but you look strong and healthy."

"I am strong and healthy."

"Then if you want a berth I can get it for you; but, though your face has a familiar look, I do not think you ever sailed with me."

"I never did."

"Still, as a fellow-seaman, I will do what I can for you."

"You must do what I ask," was the insolent reply.

"Must? You use strong language, my man, for one who asks a favor."

"I ask a right, sir, not a favor."

"What claim have you on me?"

"I will tell you."

"Be quick about it then, for I have work to do."

"You do not recognize me, I see."

"Your face is familiar, but I cannot place you."

"You may have forgotten me, but I have not forgotten you."

"What cause have you to remember me?"

"You robbed me."

"What?" and Captain Norcross was upon his feet in an instant.

"I'll tell you how you robbed me, if you will sit down and keep cool."

The face of Captain Norcross was stern now, but he sunk down in his chair and said:

"Hasten then, for as I told you, I have work to do."

"Well, you robbed me of my sweetheart long years ago."

"Ha! now I know you!"

"Yes. I am Dunn Draper."

"Yes, I know you well; and you look as though the stories I had heard of you were true."

"And what were those stories?" asked the man with a sneer.

"That you had gone to the bad."

"Is it any wonder, when the woman I loved and expected to marry—"

"She gave you no hope."

"She did until she met you."

"She regarded you as a friend, and no more."

"Well, I know that she would have married me but for you."

"Be careful, for you speak of the one whom I made my wife."

"Yes, and in making her your wife you robbed me of her."

"I expect you regret losing her fortune of thirty thousand dollars more," said Captain Norcross, with a light laugh.

"I did want her money, and counted on it too, while, as I lost my expected wife and consequently my money, I had to run off to escape financial trouble which I had gotten myself into, and you I blame for it all, for it made me a wanderer, and outcast, and what I am now."

"And now you come to me for aid?"

"Yes."

"I am willing to give you a little money to help you, and throw in some advice with it."

"You must give me five thousand dollars," was the bold reply.

Captain Norcross laughed, almost rudely, while he said:

"Your demand and your coming to me as you do put you in the light of a robber."

"Just what I am, too."

"You have the money, and I want it, and will have it."

The seaman now held a double-barreled pistol leveled full at the heart of Captain Norcross, who was unarmed, and felt that he was wholly in the villain's power.

"Count me out the money, or I will kill you, and when you have done that I will leave you locked in your room."

But, as the man spoke, a slender form glided up behind him, a blow on the head knocked him down flat, and a pistol was held covering him, while his assailant said:

"Keep quiet, shipmate, or you will have to go overboard."

In an instant Captain Norcross had sprung upon the daring robber and secured him, while, turning to the one who had come so timely to his aid, he cried:

"Ned, my boy, you are just in time."

"Foiled, and by that accursed boy whom I hoped would be hanged as a traitor," hoarsely said the seaman.

"I heard his threat, sir, as I was about to

knock, for I just arrived at the inn, and so came in," said Ned, modestly.

"You did right, my lad, and I owe you my deepest gratitude."

Then, turning to the seaman, he continued:

"As for you, sir, though I could send you to prison, I let you go."

"But mind you, do not again cross my path, while, as you just hinted that you had plotted against this boy, if harm befalls him, I will hunt you down, and woe be unto you."

"Go!"

The thwarted seaman was but too glad to get away, and hastily departed from the room, leaving Captain Norcross with Ned, who had boldly made the run down alone and ran the little shallop into port in time to keep the engagement at the Bull's Head Inn.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE OLD SEAMAN.

JUDGE ELMORE was pacing the piazza of his handsome house, when his attention was attracted to an old man coming up the walk to the mansion.

The judge was alone, his son having gone by stage to Boston some days before, and as he paced to and fro his thoughts were upon Elsie, the Witch.

"I do not like her being free, but what is to be done about it I do not know."

"Who it was that helped her out I cannot tell; but nothing will convince those superstitious fools in the village but that the devil himself came to her rescue."

"My idea is that it was that son of hers, and that they left in their shallop, which Caleb says is missing."

"Well, if they are gone, all right; but if they remain about here I shall know no peace."

"Who is this old fellow, I wonder?"

He turned as he spoke to the old man, who advanced to the steps of the piazza and saluted politely as he touched his tarpaulin.

"Well, my man, who are you, and what do you want here?" asked the judge.

"I'm an old seaman, sir, that has sailed with your son, the lieutenant, sir, for they tell me you are Judge Elmore?"

"Yes, I am Judge Elmore, and I am glad to meet any one who has sailed with my son, and you shall go into the kitchen and have a good dinner, and a bed to-night, too, if you wish."

"You are very good, sir, and I will accept your kindness, for I'm an old man and have walked far; but I am going to my home up the river some leagues, and thought I'd stop by to pay my respects to the lieutenant, your honor."

"I am sorry that my son is not at home; but I expect him back in about ten days, and in fact had a letter this morning, saying that he would sail on Wednesday, and I regret it, as the Equinoctial storms are threatening, and I have a dread of the sea."

"The sea is terrible in its anger, sir, and many a brave vessel goes down before its fury."

"By the way, I arranged with my son that I would place signal lights upon the coast at two points, which will serve as beacons to a pilot running a vessel in when it is night."

"Now, he expects to come in and out often, and you might like the berth of taking care of the lights."

"Indeed yes, your honor, and thank you."

"Then it is a bargain, and after you have had your dinner I will ride with you to the points on the coast where the beacons are to be placed, and there is a fisherman's cot near by where you can live."

"Your honor is very kind."

"I will give you a seaman's wages, and by day you can hunt and fish for my table, for which I will pay you, so that you will get a good living."

"Oh! your honor is too kind."

"No, I wish to serve you, and while you are eating I will write to my son at Portsmouth, for his vessel puts in there, and tell him I have arranged for the lights, and, that no enemy may get the benefit of them, I will agree upon certain signals that a ship must show before they are lighted."

"A good idea, your honor," answered the old seaman, and then Caleb was called and he was conducted to the kitchen, where a good meal was given to him.

In the meantime the judge wrote his letter to his son and dispatched it by a messenger to go by the afternoon's stage, and then ordering his carriage, he drove the old seaman to the point on the coast where the beacons were needed, and which were near the spots where Ned had lighted the fires to guide his mother in that terrible night of storm.

A fisherman's cot stood on the ridge, in the midst of the pines not far away, and here the old fisherman was to make his home, and he seemed more than content at the pleasant berth he had so unexpectedly dropped into.

"There's another thing, my man, which I wish you to do," said the judge.

"I am ready, your honor."

"Not far from your cot lives an old woman and her son."

"They call her a witch, and she is indeed a terrible creature, so I wish you to keep your eye open, and should you see either her or her son, at once bring me word to the Mansion."

"I will, your honor."

"Now you can get your lights ready as soon as you please, and I will have Caleb give you a week's supply of provisions to bring with you to your cot," and Judge Elmore was evidently delighted at having found so good a person to look after the coast beacons.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BEACONS.

A GALLANT ship set sail from Boston, bound upon a run up to the Maine coast, to bring back certain timber needed for the building of Government vessels.

She was an unarmed craft, but being a swift sailer, many believed that she could keep out of the way of any British enemies on the coast, and being advertised to carry passengers, the list was quickly filled.

Among her passengers were Lieutenant Elmore and his young wife, who were going to Riverview Mansion to pass the winter months, when the officer expected to have the new vessel ready for him.

From the day the stanch craft set sail on her voyage, she had bad weather, and her captain predicted a rough passage, if not a series of storms, so that the prospect was by no means cheering.

The first port made was Portsmouth, and here Lieutenant Elmore received a letter which he at once took to the commander of the ship.

"Captain, a letter meets me here from my father, in which he says that he has made all arrangements for beacons on the coast, at the channel where we run in, so that we will have no difficulty by day or night."

"Here you see, he says that a red flag by day will, by following these charts he incloses, enable you to pilot your vessel through the Graveyard Rock channel, and a blue flag stand opposite the next dangerous passage."

"At night two fires, lit as beacons, will guide us."

"This is good news, lieutenant, especially as I expect to run across some Britishers in that neighborhood, and, by not having to wait for a pilot, can easily run in and escape them," answered the captain.

Soon after the ship again sailed, and once more had to face the fury of the seas.

Try as he could, however, the captain could not arrive off the river by day, and when he did come in sight of the coast the night was fearfully dark, and a fierce tempest was raging at sea and driving hard down upon the land.

"Fire the signal-gun, captain, and then show your lights, and the fires will be relighted," said the lieutenant.

The little signal-gun was at once fired, and almost immediately a bright fire sprung up against the rocky coast.

"Your man is on duty, lieutenant," said the captain.

"Yes, and I am glad to see it, for this is a terrible storm, and one which I do not like to be off this coast in," answered the lieutenant, while the ship's captain called out:

"There goes your second light, sir."

"Yes, and with these I can run in, so I will take the helm," and Lieutenant Elmore stepped to the wheel, while the passengers watched his every movement.

Pointing his vessel for the first light, she went driving along at a fearful speed, the seas running high and savagely, the roar of the surf against the rocky shores and reefs making a noise like bursts of thunder.

Suddenly a slight form glided up to the captain's side, and said quickly:

"Pardon me, sir, but this ship is not on the right course to run into the anchorage."

"Ha! do you say so?" cried the captain, and then remarked in an almost contemptuous tone:

"What do you know about it, boy?"

"I know this about it, sir, that yonder lights do not show correctly which course to steer, and Lieutenant Elmore is but following them to destruction," was the cold reply.

"You talk well, my lad, but the lieutenant, when he saw that you were on board as a passenger, told me just who and what you are."

"I do not doubt, sir, but that he told you stories regarding me, and called me a deserter; but he cannot deny that I saved his vessel in this very channel once, and that no one on the coast knows these waters better than I do, though I am a boy."

"Well, I like your pluck, boy, and I will tell the lieutenant just what you say about the lights."

"Do so, sir, and at once, for there is little time to lose, captain, if you wish to save your vessel and the lives of all on board."

The captain sprung quickly to the side of the lieutenant, and in a word made known what Ned the Cabin Boy had said, for he it was.

"Nonsense! the boy wishes to take the helm and get the credit of running in," was the reply.

Ned heard it, and instantly answered:

"I wish no such credit, sir, for you are wrong, as you would see, if I took the helm; for I would point far different than at yonder light, which is on the crag, and not near the Haunted Fort as you believe, while the second light, which should be on Eagle's Roost Rock, is at the mouth of the ravine far to the right of it."

"My father had those signal-fires built, boy, and they are right."

Ned hastily sprung up in the mizzen shrouds and gazed long and earnestly shoreward.

Then, from his position he called out:

"Lieutenant Elmore, for God's sake hard down your helm!"

But the lieutenant did not obey, and a tall form sprung forward, seized the officer in a grasp of iron, and hurled him from the wheel to the deck while he called out in trumpet voice:

"Stand aside, sir officer! while, Ned, you take that wheel, and I'll kill any man who interferes with you."

Ned quickly sprung to the wheel, while the tall man who had so roughly treated Lieutenant Elmore, stood near with a pistol in his hands.

"Help, here, to put this wheel hard down! for do you not hear the breakers almost under our bows?" cried Ned, and in response the captain sprung to his aid, and the sharp bows of the gallant ship swept away from the danger just in the instant of time.

All on board now saw the danger which they had escaped, and stood in silence, while the discomfited officer arose to his feet, white with rage and took his stand at the weather bulkhead.

On then dashed the ship, steering a far different course from what the light indicated, and after a most perilous run, she glided into the anchorage on the lee of the islands, and all knew that the boy had saved them from death; even the lieutenant admitted this much, and added:

"That beacon-tender shall rue this, for I see now, captain, that the fires were not where they should be."

"God bless that brave boy for finding out, as he did."

"Why he was as cool about it as any man I ever saw when performing an ordinary deed," answered the captain.

"Ah! he knows the waters well, I admit, and I'll pardon him as a deserter for this good work to-night."

"But who is that fellow, captain, that threw me from the wheel?"

"He seems to be a friend of the young pilot, sir, for they came on board together; but I only know that he registered as Captain Norcross."

"That is the boy's name."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, we are at the river landing, captain, and I will be glad to have you be my guest ashore to-night, for you cannot go up the stream until morning."

The invitation was accepted, and a moment after the vessel glided alongside of the sheltered dock, and Judge Elmore met her as she touched.

"Well, my son, you did well to run in, even with the signal fires, on such a night as this," he said.

"Father, who lighted those fires?"

"An old seaman who once served with you, he told me."

"Then he is either a fool, or a traitor, sir, for they are in false positions," and the lieutenant told what had occurred.

"Where is the boy?" asked the judge.

Search was made for him, but he and his tall

friend had already gone ashore, a sailor said, and had disappeared.

"I will send and have that beacon-tender brought at once to the Mansion, and if he be a traitor, woe be unto him," said the judge, and as soon as the party went up to the house, Caleb and two other servants were dispatched to bring the old man to the Mansion.

But they returned with the information that the old man had disappeared and could be nowhere found; but they did not know that the beacon-tender was none other than Elsie, who had sought to destroy the vessel, and with her Lieutenant Elmore and his wife.

Seeing that she was foiled she had hastened to the haunted ruin, hastily renewed her garb as a Sorceress, and was preparing to retire for the night, when she heard a voice calling her name.

"Thank God! it is Ned, my noble boy," she cried, and the next moment the boy stood before her, accompanied by his stanch friend, Captain Norcross, whom he at once introduced to his mother.

CHAPTER XXV.

CAPTAIN NORCROSS MAKES A VISIT.

CAPTAIN NORCROSS and his son and heir were seated in the library of their elegant home, talking somewhat excitedly over the news that had just been brought them to the effect that Elsie the Witch and her son had returned to their cottage home to live.

They had also been discussing the strange escape of the Witch from jail, and of which the lieutenant had not heard until his return as he had gone to Boston.

The judge had told him of the affair, and that the villagers, even down to the dominie, believed that the Witch had conjured up an evil spirit to aid her, while all were anxious to let her go in peace, and the jailer had resigned his position, which, as his son now refused, it was vacant.

As the lieutenant had brought his young wife back with him, he had a mortal dread of Elsie, and to get her out of the way was the subject of discussion, when Caleb announced a visitor.

"Ask him to the library, Caleb," said the judge, and Caleb soon returned accompanied by the visitor.

It was Captain Norcross, Ned's fellow-passenger, and friend, and the lieutenant was by no means pleased to see him.

"I believe we have not met before, sir."

"I am Judge Elmore," said the judge, politely, advancing toward his visitor, who bowed coldly, and responded:

"And I, sir, am a sailor, who has called to see you upon a little matter of business—Pray, sir, do not leave the room; for what I have to say interests you also," and the stranger turned to Lieutenant Elmore, who looked surprised, but bowed and resumed his seat.

As for the judge, he almost lost his usually pompous air, and looked really uncomfortable, while he said, nervously:

"Well, sir, what is the matter between us?"

"I can tell you in a few words, Judge Elmore."

"You were appointed guardian some fourteen years ago of two children, I believe?"

"I have several times been guardian, sir, and I know not to whom you refer," and the judge became very pale.

"Well, sir, I shall not long keep you in ignorance of what children I mean, and if you have been guardian for others, I pity the unfortunate ones."

"What! do you intend to insult me, sir?" hoarsely said the judge, while Douglass sprung to his feet in anger.

"Keep cool, gentlemen, for I have much to say which you will not like," and the stranger calmly sat down and took a paper from his pocket.

Glancing at it, he said, quietly:

"Judge Elmore, fourteen years ago your brother—"

"I have no brother, sir, nor ever had."

"I beg pardon, I meant your half-brother."

"Well, he sailed for foreign lands, and being possessed of a great deal of wealth, he made you the guardian of his children, and the protector of his wife."

"He should have stayed at home, but he had some important interests in another land that he wished to look after, so he went."

"He gave into your hands all his wealth for his wife and children, to keep for them, should death overtake him upon the seas, and with the understanding that you should have all, did his heirs die."

"What is this to you, sir?" said the judge.

"You shall know, if you will only have patience."

"The witness to this transaction was a gentleman now living in Boston; but your half-brother little dreamed that a witness was needed, as he trusted you implicitly."

"But the sequel shows his mistake, for, upon the vessel of your half-brother, sailed an assassin hired to destroy the craft in mid-ocean and thus kill her captain."

"A strange circumstance threw the two men together in the same boat, after the ship went down, and the assassin lay with a broken leg at the mercy of his intended victim."

"The boat was cast upon an island, and there the two men spent many long years, the assassin confessing his intended crime to the man who nursed him so tenderly back to health and strength."

"At last a vessel put in to the island and they were saved."

"Your half-brother returned to America for his children, and found that they had mysteriously disappeared."

"But he remained until he found his wife, and heard from her lips how attempt after attempt had been made to rob her of her children, and even to kill them and herself too."

"She had never heard one word from you, Judge Elmore, as to your being their protector, and knowing that her husband's vessel was lost at sea, and knowing nothing of his great wealth, she sold out her home, purchased a little craft, and set sail alone to find another home somewhere on the coast."

"This home she found: but the terror of losing her children, which the poor woman had gone through with, unseated her reason, and she imagined herself a witch."

"Her children knew that on this idea she was insane, and were kind to her, while other people derided."

"She was also persecuted by one who had loved her before I married her, and who swore revenge against her, and it is no wonder the poor woman is crazed."

"A strange fatality brought her near your home, though she had never met you, and simply knew you as the half-brother of her husband."

"But she would not make herself known, and it is well for her that she did not."

"Under the name of Elsie Norcross, and Elsie the Witch, you failed to recognize Ellen Evans, the wife of Norcross Evans, your half-brother, whom you had sought to kill, that you might defraud them of their wealth."

"Your ally in crime, Ezra Curtis, has given me a written confession of all, and has restored every dollar of his stolen wealth, with its increase, and that leaves him a pauper, so that your son Douglass loses his wife's fortune."

"When I tell you that I passed last night at the house of Elsie the Witch, and that my name is Norcross Evans, you will see the advisability of giving up all you possess, and which you stole from me, for you had nothing when I made you guardian, except a few thousands I gave you."

"Now, Judge Elmore, my esteemed half-brother, I give you and your son, the destroyer of my daughter's life, just one hour to leave my house."

"If you refuse to go, if you attempt to take aught else than your personal effects, you shall go to prison."

"Now you have the alternative, and you must act promptly, for I intend to bring my wife and son home to-night."

Judge Elmore's head had dropped forward in his hands, and he seemed utterly crushed, while his son looked as though he wished to spring upon the man who confronted them.

But he thought better of it, and said to his father in a low tone:

"Come, father, we must go from here, and do not give up, for we have the money I intended to pay for the new vessel with, and we will have that."

"Pardon me, sir, but I have already had that vessel seized as my property, and intend to command her myself, turning her into a privateer, and my first lieutenant shall be my son Ned, who was a Cabin Boy under you, Douglass Elmore."

"No, sir, you have nothing, except what your purses contain, and I advise you to depart at once, for I am master here."

They both felt that he spoke the truth, and with horror of the prison, to which he had sentenced so many in his judicial career, Judge Elmore was glad to get off unpunished for his crimes, and that afternoon took the stage with his son for Boston.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONCLUSION.

CAPTAIN NORCROSS EVANS kept his word, and brought his wife, Elsie, and son, Ned, to Riverview Mansion the very day that the judge and the lieutenant left it.

As for Elsie, she had undergone a great change, her reason had come back to her, and she was no longer one who could be called a witch, and shrunk with horror from the name she had so long borne.

To add to the joy of the trio, a great surprise came upon them, for a fisherman arrived at the mansion and reported that on the day that Nora had sprung from the cliff he had been fishing close in under the rocks, and had seen the maiden fall, and had at once taken her into his boat.

Rowing to his cot, some leagues down the coast, on an island, he had placed the maiden in charge of his wife, while he started off in his shallop with a load of fish.

He had been captured by an English vessel, and had only escaped and returned home the previous day to find the maiden still an inmate of his cot, and just recovering from a long attack of brain fever.

She had been tenderly nursed through all by the humble fisherman's wife and a few of her island friends, and he had at once come to find out the friends of the young girl, and tell them of her safety.

Quickly did Ned sail in his shallop to the island, and the following day started back with his dearly loved sister, who had been so strangely rescued from death.

But ere he left the humble cot the hearts of the fisherman and his wife were made glad by a purse heavy with gold, which Captain Evans had told his son to give them.

The welcome home made Nora a new girl, and joy certainly reigned supreme in Riverview household.

When the new vessel was finished, Captain Evans sailed in her with privateer papers, and Ned was his lieutenant, and won new honors in his sea career, while his cousin Douglass Elmore never rose higher in his profession, but started on the down grade, was dismissed from the navy, joined a privateer and turned her into a pirate.

As an outlaw of the sea he sought to bring ruin and death upon Ned Norcross, whom he looked upon as the cause of his misfortunes and downfall.

But this determination to destroy him Ned himself thwarted, and in the end brought the pirate lieutenant to the yard-arm for his crimes, while the career of Ned the Cabin Boy was one of honor to the end of his life.

THE END.

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